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Decentralization Policy and Citizen Participation in Government: The Case of Liberia

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Abstract

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Political decentralization has been advanced in the 21st century as a prescription for enabling citizens' participation in politics and increasing good governance. However, empirical investigations have offered limited knowledge about decentralization efforts in Liberia. This study explored if decentralization could serve as a catalyst for citizens' participation and good governance in Liberia. The polarity of participation and representation - one of the pairs in the polarities of democracy model developed by Benet - was used to establish the theoretical foundation for this study. The study employed a case study research design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 participants recruited through snowball sampling and subjected to a thematic content procedure for analysis. The main theme indicated that decentralization was perceived as Liberia's best policy option to repair 171 years of political, social, and economic challenges. Establishment of service centers at the county level to manage social development funds and the passage of the local government act were acknowledged as achievements of the decentralization policy in Liberia. On the other hand, the country's long history of centralized governance, corruption, inequality, constitution violations, and misused of public resources were identified as major obstacles to successful implementation of decentralization policy measures. The social change implication of the study involves identifying a potential avenue for the government and citizens of Liberia to build a stronger relationship through reform which will ultimately enhance citizens' ability to be involved in governmental decision making at both national and local levels.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my dad, Honorable Johnny Tarlue Clarke for encouraging me to pursue this degree. Also, to my mother, Oretha Tetee Zaybay, my brothers and sisters for their support. To my three daughters, Grace Clarke, Rolyn Clarke, and Eleanor Clarke for inspiring me by their academic determinations. Finally, to my two grandchildren who always bring me joy, Angel and Roman.

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Chapter 1: Introduction of the Study

Introduction

This study investigated whether decentralization could enhance citizens'

participation and increase good governance in Liberia, and whether decentralization can

repair the impediments of a 171-year-old centralized system of governance in Liberia.

Equivocally, institutions like good governance and citizens' political participation have

become even more critical in the restoration of peace and democracy (Sawyer, 2008).

Based on Sawyer's assertion, the long and brutal on-and-off civil war that engulfed

Liberia for the most of 14 years, from 1989 to 2004, left devastation on all democratic

systems; coupled with 171 years of centralized governance which has produced meager

economic growth and social development.

As Liberia strives to reconstruct and sustain peace and democracy, citizens'

participation in decision-making and good governance must be at the heart of any effort.

As suggested by Pankaj (2007), a decentralization policy based on political and economic

framework can serve as a catalyzer to help institutions and governments overcome

obstacles to successful governing. Furthermore, a decentralization policy could eliminate

citizens' exclusion and increase good governance (Taylor, 2007). Faguet (2011) also

argued that while the possible benefits of political decentralization have been extensive in

the literature, most of the empirical studies have investigated the efforts of

decentralization on "public sector outputs" (p. 2). The specific public-sector outputs are

investment levels, public service provision, education and health, and macroeconomic

stability," rather than on the more general "governance-type issues like accountability, political competition, and participation in public decision-making" (p. 2).

Thus, this study focused on government-type issues, specifically citizens' participation and good governance in Liberia. Additionally, some recent studies showed that decentralization effects on the quality of governance have been comparatively investigated (Hamilton, 2004). Outputs such as health, school, and people involvement were commonly more relevant than management issues such as accountability, political competition, and citizen participation in institutions that support decentralization efforts (Taylor, 2007). Additionally, decentralization literature has mostly focused on political and policy-relevant outcomes; examining the potential effects of decentralization on citizens' participation in government has been lacking in the literature. Thus, this study bridged the gap in the literature by examining whether decentralization policy is perceived as a potential enhancement to citizen's participation and good governance in Liberia.

This chapter covers the following topics: introduction to the study, the research problem, purpose of the study, assumptions, scope and de-limitations, limitation, significance, the research question, and the social change implications. Finally, in this chapter, the polarities of democracy model specifically, the polarity of participation and representation was introduced as the theoretical framework for the study.

Background of the Study

Historically, Liberia was founded by the American Colonization Society (ACS), after the emancipation of slaves in the United States and other islands in the early 1800s

(Gilbert & Lyon, 2002). According to the Liberia Institute and Statistical Geo

Information System (LISGIS), the population as of January 2017 is 4.7 million people.

The country is divided into 15 administrative counties as reported in the

document. The most recent census estimated the population density of 93 people per

square mile, yet this figure hides an uneven distribution of the population in the territory

(LISGIS, 2017). Notably, as indicated by LISGIS, the largest urban agglomeration shows

that the national capital city of Monrovia displays a density of 1,500 persons per square

mile while the county where it sits, Montserrado, is home to about one-third (32.2%) of

the population of the country (LISGIS, 2017). These statistics suggest that the system of

governance has not served the national interest of all its citizens, especially with the

government operating from one small city.

Furthermore, the statistical data also indicate that rural areas dwellers have not

fully benefitted from the economical, educational, political systems, and decision-making

process in government. However, it is reasonable to conclude that based on the data

presented, the population of Liberia has been on the increase over the past recent decades.

Additionally, as revealed by the United Nation Development Programme.

Liberia's Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2015 has increased from 0.386 to

0.427, an increase of 10.6% (Human Development Report [HDR], 2016). The same HDR

also indicated that life expectancy at birth increased by 14.0 years in Liberia. The

demographical data above suggests consistent increase in the population of Liberia's HDI

value, and life expectancy.

Historically, the nation Liberia was known as the "Grain Coast" founded by some repatriated slaves headed by a racist organization called the ACS in the 1800 (Kieh, 2008; Sawyer, 2008). Accordingly, the land was declared by settlers to be free. However, Kieh (2008) argued that the settlers met occupants on the land upon arrival. In fact, other historians, such as the studies of Sawyer (1992) and Gilbert (2008), indicated that there were occupants on the land dating back as far back as the 12th century and nothing was called "free land." Also, based on Kieh's (2008) assertions, there were other tribal groups that first arrived on the land before the coming of the settlers and when the Mali Empire declined totally in 1591, there was a greater influx of early tribes (Kieh, 2008). Therefore, the proclamation of Liberia being a free land is debatable.

The economic and political systems of the indigenous inhabitants were described by Kieh (2008) and Gilbert et al. (2008), which also includes the government structure: A practice of kinship styles of leadership and the economy based on agriculture and arts brought from where they came from. Kieh stated that the inhabitants had skill in rice cultivation and other crops. On the other hand, the settlers came with ideas to Christianize and modernize the African which were borrowed from their slaves' masters.

Therefore, the settlers faced many obstacles settling on the land that belonged to the indigenous people (Kieh, 2008). Thus, Sawyer (2008) also asserted that the indigenous economic system was primarily the barter system that works very well for them while the settlers' official currency, the dollar was backed by the United States government which would change this system and the leadership structure of the people the settlers met on the land.

Radelet (2008), who also did a comprehensive review of the history of Liberia, alluded to the fact that since the ACS era, this centralized system of governing continues to drive Liberia's political and economic affairs. Unfortunately, this system of governance has excluded or has offered limited inclusion of citizens in decision-making that has created poor management, slow growth, and development in Liberia (Radelet, 2008). This means that since the independence of Liberia in 1847, the country has less development and slower economic growth compared to other nations in Africa.

According to Radelet and Johnson-Sirleaf (2008), as Liberia seeks to recover from war, the need to address citizens' participation and good governance becomes crucial to create reforms at all levels in Liberia. Equivocally, while it is important to acknowledge some relative contributions according to Sawyer (2008) by citizens of grassroots organizations and advocacy, civic political participation in both national and local governments is lacking and has yet to be achieved in Liberia, especially in the implementation of a decentralization policy.

Chattopadhyay (2012) offered that the core outcome of a decentralization policy was to create the opportunity for equality, social change, to transform strain, and to give equal access to national resources to everyone. The author claimed that a decentralization policy could enhance citizens' ability to champion their affairs and development. Accordingly, Gilbert and Lyon (2006) supported the idea when they alluded to the importance of citizens' participation and stated that when people are fully involved in decision-making process at both local and nation levels, it sustains peace and democracy in society.

Also, Lederach (1996) argued that local participation in politics and decision-making helps transform an unproductive political system. According to Olson and Rothman (2001), between 1945 and 1993, about 91 civil wars were identified around the world as conflict over the locals' rights, resources, and identity. This becomes a reality when citizens and local government continue to experience political isolation and alienation. Based on these concepts by these theorists, an assertion can be made that the long civil war and the system of centralized governance in Liberia resulted from the lack of citizen's participation in decision making and bad governance in Liberia.

Problem Statement

Politically, citizen participation and good governance efforts at both local and national levels sustain peace and democracy in society (Morten, 2005). Furthermore, a decentralization policy continues to be perceived as the cornerstone for political and economic decision-making, and to support good governance, citizen participation, and economic prosperities (Treisman, 2007). Treisman also argued that decentralization, as compared to a centralized system of government, creates many opportunities to bring the government and the citizenry closer. Treisman continued to assert that decentralization process fosters and produces more development, nurtures civic virtue, protects liberty, exploits local information, and stimulates policy innovation.

Additionally, Haider and Badami (2010) argued that the core value of decentralization is the shifting of power from a centralized system to local government which is the key catalyzer for creating effective reforms in government system. However, despite the abundance of studies on the positive effects of decentralization, there is still a

dearth of knowledge about how a decentralization policy is perceived in terms of increasing citizens' participation and good governance in Liberia.

Thus, this study bridged the gap by providing knowledge on the perception of decentralization policy as a potential prescription to enhance citizen participation and increase good governance in Liberia.

Purpose

The primary objective of this study examined whether citizens in Liberia perceived decentralization as a potential contributing factor to improving citizens' participation and good government in Liberia. The study is significant to political and policy analysts by highlighting the importance of enhancing the role of citizens in the decision-making process in Liberia. Knowledge gained through this study will be substantial for public administrators and politicians who value citizens' perspectives on matters of policy and politics to sustain peace, democracy, and development.

Research Question

This study focused on the central research question: How can a decentralization policy potentially enhance citizen participation and increase good governance in Liberia? In addressing this central research question, five sub-questions were also addressed:

- What are the most appropriate ways for the Liberian citizens to get directly involved in the governance of their country?

- Are there any obstacles to citizen participation in Liberia?

- How can citizens overcome these barriers if there are any?

- Is the implementation of decentralization possible in Liberia?

- What are the anticipated benefits of political decentralization?

Theoretical Framework

As Liberia strives to rebuild a stable and sustainable democratic system, investigating how can a decentralization policy potentially enhance citizens' participation and increase good governance in Liberia become imperative. However, understanding whether this can be achieved involved aligning the decentralization policy with the polarities of the democracy model presented by Benet (2006, 2012, 2013) to situate this study in the field of public policy and provided the theoretical basis for how decentralization policy can impact participation and good governance. The Polarities of Democracy model is presented by Benet as a unifying theory of democracy to guide healthy, sustainable, and just social change efforts.

The model has it birth in the theoretical concept of Johnson's (1998) polarity management. Johnson, who first developed the conceptual framework of the model in the 1970s, asserted that the aim of the model is to maximize positive outcomes while minimizing the negative outcomes of polarities. The model was presented by Johnson as friendly elements to manage all polarities in life.

For Johnson, polarities are part of everyday life, they are an ongoing process, and it? is chronic issues that are unsolvable and that cannot easily be addressed with traditional problem-solving skills. Therefore, Johnson proposed that polarity management is the best option to deal with life's complexities and challenges. Johnson also claimed that polarity management increases in value as the issues of complexity, diversity, and resistance to change increase.

Furthermore, polarity management can serve as a significant force to overcome complexity and capitalizes on diversity without the alienation of people or community (Johnson, 1998). Additionally, Johnson offered that polarity management provides strategies to overcome resistance and resources for sustainable change. However, it was asserted that leaders and societies that decide to employ the polarity management model must always distinguish between the problem and polarities to effectively manage the polarities that could bring dividend to their institution.

Adopting and using this model, Benet (2006) created the polarities of democracy model and concluded that the model promotes democratization to overpower oppression, especially in the workplace and in society. The model was labeled into five sets according to Benet. Among these polarities' pairs, I found the "polarity of participation and representation" as the best fit framework for this study, based on its unique quality among the five pairs of polarities, as described by the author. However, these five pairs cannot be divorced from each other. They are intertwined and co-dependent.

Benet (2013) also stated that the five pairs of polarities are interdependent and built on each other's functions. Thus, the mismanagement of one pair can have negative implications for the other pairs and the proper management of one pair can also have positive impact on the other pairs. Thus, the failure to effectively manage the polarity of participation and representation pair can ultimately have a negative impact on the other pairs of polarities of democracy.

Consequently, since this study is deeply concerned with citizens' participation and representation in local and national governments, the polarities of democracy theory

provided relevant knowledge of how citizens can become active participants and how good governance can be achieved through a political and democratic government. It also provided understanding of how to minimize negativity, risks, and threats, and decrease reliance on citizens' representation only. Also, this model was used to explain the interventions needed to increase democratic efforts and improve good governance in Liberia.

Subsequently, participation and representation were explained and introduced separately by Benet (2012). Representation was presented as, "a polarity of function for participation, a necessary means to enable participation to flourish" (p. 242). Whereas, participation was presented as "an essential element of democratic theory, and one of the factors most consistently identified in general and democratic research sources as a key element of democracy" (p. 242). Also, the participation and representation polarity were represented as a hybrid, both a polarity of function but also a polarity of meaning. Benet further explained that when the polarities of democracy is managed effectively, it produces positive social change and increases strategies to provide a healthy, sustainable, and robust political system.

Relying on the explanation by Benet (2013), that when participation and representation polarity are managed effectively, then representation serves as a process whereby the individual's ability to engage in participation is strengthened and regenerated. In furtherance, the pair (participation and representation) serves as a polarity of hybrid, both as a polarity of function and means by which participation is achieved. Echoing Young's (2002) views, Benet also offered that representative forms of

democracy are necessary not only for nations, but for neighborhoods and workplaces and that participation becomes needed for the effective functioning of democracy.

In the context of Liberia's centralized system of governance, citizens' participation has been compromised due to reliance on political representation, which has not given them the full political benefit, growth, and development. This is in line with what Benet considered mismanagement of the polarities of democracy that can lead to adverse effects as listed above. Therefore, the effective management of the polarity of participation and representation can improve Liberia's political reality through a decentralization policy that will minimize negative efforts and maximize positive benefits to citizens.

Benet (2013) reported on the views offered by some political scientists who have elevated representation to a level at which it became the distinctive feature of democracy. According to the author, these theorists advanced the idea that participation should not play a significant role in the democratic process. They argued that the limitation of participation becomes necessary because it ensures more stability in the community. The theorists see significant participation as less important in the democratic process because it invites chaos based on the notion that many citizens do not have the capacity to decide on complex political issues.

Contrary to the above views, Benet (2013) viewed participation as an essential element of democracy to address oppression and suppression based on Pateman's (1970) perspectives. Furthermore, for Benet, participation has a wider scope and is an essential element to the establishment and maintenance of a democratic polity. Furthermore,

participation is regarded not just as a set of national representatives but also as a participatory society in which people have meaningful decision-making power.

Benet (2013) argued that participation should not be confused with pseudo-participatory systems designed to create simply the perception that people are participating, while real decision-making power remains in the hands of authorities. Furthermore, Benet also views participation as a human rights issue associated with three interrelated functions that participation serves: participation provides people control over decision-making, it provides a learning process, and it impacts human development.

Citing the United Nations' resolution Article 23 (4) of the document on human rights, Benet offered that the implication of this declaration supports his claim that participation is indeed a human rights issue. By endorsing Pateman's (1970) views, Benet argued that if participation is essential for people exercising control over their lives and their world, and if one of the purposes of democracy is to allow people to gain control over their lives, then participation that enables control be an essential element of democracy and as a human rights issue.

In Benet's (2013) assertion, participation in decision making benefits everyone because better decisions are made that lead to increased productivity. Benet agrees with Pateman (1970) that a participatory decision-making process increases the extent to which individuals will accept decisions that have been arrived at and that a participatory decision-making process can significantly contribute to both people's satisfaction and organizational success and productivity.

Applying Benet's (2006, 2012, & 2013) polarity of participation and representation model to this study provided a more comprehensive understanding of how a decentralization policy could provide good governance and increase citizen participation in it. Considering Benet's explanation of the polarity of participation and representation offered above, Liberia's centralized governing system is an obvious example of the mismanagement of the polarities of democracy because this system of governance has for many years alienated citizens from decision-making and democratic processes which have led to underdevelopment and slow growth.

Moreover, because of this centralized governing system in Liberia, citizens continue to rely only on representation, while active participation in national and local governments have been compromised and are invisible. As a result, citizens are spectators to their affairs. On the other hand, the decentralization document has indicated that the government of Liberia has been over the years experiencing unproductive decisions that have led to bad governance for many decades.

Research Design

Based on the research question, I employed a qualitative method of inquiry. Relying on Creswell's (2009) description of qualitative research, specifically the case study approach that involved both document review and interviews, I offer the justification of why the qualitative method was appropriate for this study. Based on Creswell's assertion, case study approach offers techniques in gathering data and the approach is the most flexible method in the field of social science research. Thus, the

case study approach best fit this research study because it provided an in-depth understanding of the social and cultural issues which this study explored.

Yin (1984) presented the unique benefits of the case study method. He claimed that the approach investigates contemporary issues and real-life issues. Yin emphasized that the goal of case study approach is to unveil the most profound content to create understanding and awareness. The case study approach was selected because it aligned with this study that examined citizens' perceptions of decentralization policy in Liberia.

The method of data collection involved conducting document review and interviews with 20 participants in Liberia. The participants were representatives of public and private sectors, and diverse in term of gender, age, education, and religious affiliation. Also, I reviewed the government's documents on decentralization and governance from the Governance Commission and Ministry of Internal Affairs of Liberia. In adherence to Yin (1986), the data and sources were formatted and stored appropriately.

The questionnaires, dataset, notepad, recorder, and all material used were locked up properly, and I was the only person to have access to them (Yin, 1986). The information was exclusively used for this study. The data were analyzed to evoke the themes based on the perception among Liberians regarding citizens' participation and good governance.

Definitions of Keywords

In this study, the following terms were defined and used from a public policy perspective and from a public administration perspective.

Liberia. The term Liberia is known as the land of freedom, used by the settlers from the United States (Steinberg, 2009). The author indicated that the nation is among the first nations in Africa to gain political independence the 1800 and founding member of the UN. The current population is 4.7 million (LISGIS, 2017) and has a democratically centralized system of government.

Governance. Drawing from Sheng's (2010) work, governance is a political, economic, and social process by which a decision is made and the process by which a decision is implemented or not implemented. Sheng offers that the concept of governance was introduced as the process or model to compare efficient and ineffective government functioning and governing systems by which government provides goods and services to its citizens.

Citizen participation. In this study, citizens' participation is used in a political context as acknowledgment of the freedoms to engage, involve, participate, organize, and be a part of politics at local and national levels.

Decentralization. Decentralization in its political aspect means the transferring of power to local territories to determine policies, and participate in decision making and development (Sheng, 2010). In this study, decentralization is conceptualized as political power sharing between national and local agencies, where regional powers are substantial in both number and importance (Tambulasi & Kayuni, 2007). A generalized definition offers that decentralization provides and gives locals or citizens the freedom to initiate their affairs.

Assumptions of the Study

As described in Creswell's (2012) work, a researcher must consider some philosophical assumptions when undertaking a qualitative study because the researcher's worldview can shape the study. To effectively utilize any part of the qualitative method, Creswell asserted that assumptions in the study must be adequately addressed. To gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of how decentralization policy could increase citizens' participation and increase good governance in Liberia, the following assumptions were made:

- The participants selected to be interviewed were credible and would provide honest answers to the interview questions. This assumption was believe to be factual based on the status and knowledge of all those who participated in the study.

- The documents from the public sector on the decentralization policy, the local government act, and the health and educational acts from the National Legislature, Governance Commission, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs will be accurate. However, some of the government's document to be reviewed could be altered by the government to fit the government's political agenda which could therefore distort the data.

- Finally, as it relates to the process, there are primary areas of consideration in this study for which the data collected can be used and applicable to other countries and context in Africa. However, I recognized that not all countries in

West Africa share the same culture, political, and economic context. to generalize the study.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope and delimitations of this study have to do with the boundaries of the study which is to determine how decentralization policy can enhance participation and good governance in Liberia, and the data collection period (March-May 2018). The data for this study were collected within 90 days. However, there were flexibility in the documents review process. This means that I was able to reschedule a review if the requested document was unavailable or if there was time constraint on my part.

Additionally, both data and other relevant information gathered from these government's institutions (Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Governance Commission), provided in-depth understanding of the research question on which this study was based. These institutions were selected because they are involved with the decentralization policies of Liberia.

Limitations of the Study

The limitation that concerns this study was personal biases. Patton (2002) claimed that bias can be a significant limitation in a qualitative study since the researcher is the principal source for the data collection, analysis, and narration. Thus, personal biases can influence the outcome if they are not managed properly (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2008). To manage my personal bias, I maintained high level of awareness, used triangulation, and had other experienced researchers look over the work.

Additionally, I created triangulation mechanisms by checking in with the participants to validate the data and interpretation to ensure that the information was what they stated (Goulding, 2002; Maxwell, 2013). The participants were assured of their privacy to gain their full participation in the process. Additionally, as the sole researcher of this study, I intentionally designed the criteria to select the participants and the questions to ask them. However, the questionnaire suffered from some subjectivity and biases. Therefore, the simplicity of the questions sought to help the participants understand the questions during the interview. Additionally, providing more clarity of questions was critical, informing the participants of the nature and intention of this study were also important to eliminate any bias and limitation which enable the participants to answer each question comfortably.

<div style="text-align:center">Significance of the Study</div>

The significance of this study was that it provided scholarly knowledge on citizens' perceptions of whether a decentralization policy could enhance citizens' participation [in what exactly?] and good governance in Liberia. Improving the efficiency and productivity of services to citizens is paramount in public administration (Bryson, 2004). Based on this notion, this study sought to increase the understanding of how citizens' participation in political processes could increase the abilities of both local and national governments' abilities to deliver goods and services to all citizens efficiently.

Furthermore, the study is significant to policy analysts, administrators, and decision makers in Liberia, and Africa for public reforms to enhance good governance. Most importantly, the study is important for politicians, public administrators, and policy

analysts who value citizens' engagement in matters of policy, politics, and decision-making at both national and local levels. Ultimately, this study is relevant to the field of public policy and administration as it added knowledge of the importance of citizens' participation and good governance in Liberia. It provided suggestions and interventions for government's political and economic reforms. Finally, the study offered supports to both private and public institutions to avoid unwanted errors and minimize negative outcomes of governance's programs to maximize goods and services delivery to citizens.

Implications of Social Change

The implications for social change included the formulation of a potential partnership between citizens of Liberia and the national governments, specifically in political participation, to increase development, economic growth, and prosperity. As Liberia's democratic government collapsed due to 14 years of war, effective change in governing is vital in rebuilding and sustaining democracy and peace. Democracy must create greater equality and give access to community resources and development to all citizens in Liberia. This means that government must be able to institute reform measures that will allow the government to value the views and rights of everyone and to increase citizens' participation in decision-making process in Liberia.

Summary

This chapter introduced the study which provided an in-depth knowledge of how decentralization policy could enhance citizen participation and increase good governance in Liberia. In this chapter, there was citizen participation, when citizens were given an equitable voice in political processes and could make meaningful contributions in

decision-making. Critically, citizens' access to education, economic, and leadership roles for decision-making were broadened. Additionally, decentralization policy became the political and economic machinery to facilitate fast growth and development. The decentralization framework counts for more transparency and citizens' full participation in the governing processes at all levels (Baskaran, 2009). It promotes and sustains citizens' efforts to decide and act on their own affairs.

By employing the polarities of democracy model by Benet, specifically the polarity of participation and representation, the study provided an in-depth knowledge of decentralization policy, citizen's participation, and good governance. The lesson learned is that the mismanagement of the polarities of democracy in Liberia for many years, coupled with 171 years of centralized system of governing, have created the need for decentralization policy that could enhance citizens' participation and good governance in Liberia. The study relied on the scholarly knowledge in the field of social science, particularly public policy and political material to broaden the perspective of how decentralization policy can enhance participation and governance.

By using a qualitative case study approach, this study gained an in-depth understanding of the subject. A sample size of 20 participants was selected for opened-ended questions interviews in addition to reviewing relevant government documents.

Chapter two covers the literature review, which was used to scholarly ground this study. It identified the gaps in the study which establish the significance of this study. Based on the gaps identified in the literature, the justification for the study and the significance of this study became understandable. Additionally, chapter three described

and provided an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the methodology chosen to conduct this study. The findings and interpretation of the data gathered through the methodology formed chapter four of the study. Finally, chapter five presented the conclusion along with the recommendations which include the need for further study as well as the social change implication.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter includes sections that investigated how decentralization policy was perceived as a prescription to enhance citizen's participation and to increase good governance in Liberia. The study was guided by the polarities of democracy theory, specifically, the polarity of participation and representation, which is one of the five pillars described in Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) model of the polarities of democracy.

The strategy used to select the literature for this study was to search the following databases: Sage Political Science, ProQuest Central, Academic Search Premier, PolicyFile, SocINDEX, Google Scholar, Yahoo Scholar, and the Encarta, 2009 Microsoft Corporation. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Good Governance Commission of Liberia Libraries were also used to collect sources for the literature review. However, a critical step to this process was to first identify keywords (Liberia, decentralization, governance, and participation) in the study to collect the relevant materials for the review.

Also, due to the historical, political, and cultural context and natures of this study, it was important in this study to follow the guidelines of identifying and selecting sources no more than five years old. However, it became imperative to consider some articles and books that were more than five years old because of the nature of this study indicated above. The materials that were five years older added valuable understanding, background, and knowledge to the study – specifically in terms of the historical, political, and cultural context of Liberia. However, most of the literature was based on peer-

reviewed materials and articles. These articles increased the scholarly foundation of the study.

The chapter includes strategies to search relevant scholars' sources, and summary of the review. The major section in this chapter includes:

- The historical content of Liberia

- Decentralization policy

- Governance

- Citizen participation

The above listed keywords provided in-depth knowledge of the research question. The review begins with the historical, political, economic, and peace process of Liberia.

The Literature Review

Historical Context of Liberia

In presenting the historical overview of Liberia, it was important to look at occupation and migration, economy and political systems, the 14 years of civil war and peace process. Steinberg (2009), Kieh (2008), and Dolo (1996) indicated that the nation shared a border with three countries in West Africa, a, b, and c, known as the Manu River Countries, and on the south by the Atlantic Ocean.

The population of Liberia has grown to approximately 4.7 million as reported in 2017 by LISGIS from 3.5 million in 2010. Also, there are 16 different ethnic groups and descendants of the settlers with 5% of the population while the rest are indigenous (CWIQ Report, 2007; Kieh 2008). English is the national spoken language; however, there are 32 dialects spoken by indigenous people (Runn-Marcos, Kolleholon and Ngovo,

2005). Steinberg (2009) characterized Liberia's history by two posing factors: the history of the settlers and the history of the indigenous peoples. Liberia is one of Africa's first independent countries, but it is also the smallest, and leas developed.

The nation's political and governance structures were led by the settlers for many decades (Sawyer, 2008). The settlers' led government was heavily supported by the U. S. government (Steinberg, 2009). The Tubman 1944 led government made changes in term of policy and governance functions (Runn-Marcos et al., 2005). However, he ruled with fear and abuse of public power.

Prior to the Tubman led era, the ACS had encountered unanticipated resistance and challenges from the indigenous people (Runn-Marcos et al., 2005; Sawyer, 1996). Therefore, the settle administration asked the US for assistance to combat the native people and the US' President ordered Cpt. Robert F. Stockton to Liberia (Sawyer, 2008). Captain Stockton arrived in Liberia along with Eli Ayres through Sierra Leone on a Navy Vessel called "The Alligator," which opened the door for the arrival of many settlers in Liberia. Also, according to the author, the negotiation to acquire land by the settlers ends up to a warfare and the indigenous were physical forced to give up more land to the settlers (Gilbert et al., 2004). Thus, this was the basis for the leaders of the settlers early claimed that there were no occupants on the land which is debatable as stated in the introductory chapter of this study based on the assertion that there were previous migrations before the arrival of the settlers.

Thus, this indicates that the issue of Liberia's occupation history presents two sides which needs to be considered when discussing the history of Liberia. Also, the

history of occupation suggests the genesis of hatred in Liberia. However, despite the challenges of occupation by the natives, the settlers occupied the lands by overpowering the native people (Sawyer, 2008) and with the help of the United States, the liberated slaves organized a centralized system of government to rule. However, this indicates that there were two different kind governments, one of the liberated slaves and the other of the natives (Sawyer, 2008). The two governments divided the country as the settlers ruled the urban part of the country while the natives' government rule the rural part.

The Political and Economic Systems of Liberia

Politically, the natives' government was a kinship inherited from the former empires while the settlers' government was in the form of the US constitutional government (Gilbert, 2004). Also, the natives' economy depended on agriculture they brought with them. These tribal groups economy system was copied from the Empires they came from which was mainly the exchange of goods and there was no official currency.

On the other hand, the economy of the settlers depended on US support (foreign aid) and the exportation of iron ore and other minerals (Gilbert et al., 2004). Firestore started the largest rubber plantation to negotiate loan for Liberia (Sawyer, 2008). Subsequently, more jobs were created, and rubber became a major revenue source of Liberia. Sawyer and Kieh contended that as the result of the United State presence in Liberia, the economy of Liberia grew considerable, the government of Liberia extracted over $500M in foreign aids from 1946 tom 1960.

Steinberg (2009) offered that in 1971, the Liberia economy rose from $500M to about a billion dollars from mineral exportation including rubber. In the same year, according to Gilbert et al (2004) and Sawyer (2008) indicated that Liberia also prospered when the United States donated foreign aid to Liberia in exchange for land free of rent. This also helped the economy of Liberia to mature quickly from primitive agriculture and mining to modernization industry making Liberia the second larger producer of iron ore in the world. However, Steinberg (2009) asserted that there were huge economic achievements; but the leaders of the free slave led government were highly involved in exploitation of mineral resources and massive corruption including mis-management of the polarities of democracy.

Centralized Government System in Liberia

Drawing from Runn-Marcos et al (2005), "Liberia's Centralized Government" and the "Opened Door" policy have their political and economic roots in Edwin J. Barclay's presidency in the 1930s. Kieh (2008) offered that Edwin J. Barclay was a member of the ruling party called the True Whig Party that elected him as president of Liberia in 1930. It was stated by the author that Barclay's presidency can be accredited for the economic policy known as the "Opened Door," borrowed from the US and China relation agreement. In addition, a centralized political government that operated from the small city of Monrovia with state power in the hands of the elites (Kieh, 2008). As stated by the authors that in the early 1930s, Liberia benefited from this policy from signing concessions with international partners and investors as the result of these policies adopted by President Barclay.

Additionally, Barclay's administration was also credited with helping the country survive some threats to its sovereignty (Kieh, 2008). The author contended that there were political and economic threats to recolonize Liberia by countries like Germany, UK, and the USA but President Barclay's administration renegotiated agreements that avoided political and economic strangulations. As stated by Dolo (1996) that President Tubman continue the same opened door policy when President Barclay retired in 1944. This broke ground for collaborations between the elites who were decedents of the settlers and indigenous people. Tubman also eliminated the forty miles boundary, removed barriers and eliminate human right violations of the natives (Gilbert et 2004). Because of these policies introduced by Tubman, local people obtained some rights in politics and receive better education.

However, the Liberian political system still involved one political party (True Wing Party-TWP) and a centralized governing which was dominated and controlled by the elite supported by the US. This form of political arrangement was described by Kieh (2008) as "quasi democracy" due to its political limitations and manipulations by a one political party system and in a true democratic sense did not represent a democratic system of governance.

However, Gilbert et al (2004) offered that the symbol of what was perceived by the leaders to be democratic government were well maintained as outlined in the constitution, a presidency with executive power, a legislature that met frequently, and a supreme court with additional subordinate courts in the ruling party's view constituted a democratic form of government.

However, Sawyer (2008) contended that President Tubman implemented the Open-Door Policy inherited from Barclay gain millions in aids and many jobs were created for both people of the decedents and the indigenous as well. The Tubman led government stimulated economic growth. In 1960, Liberia attracted 500 million in foreign aid; exports rose from about 16 million to almost 83 million (Runn-Marcos, et al., 2005). The authors added that the Government revenue rose from just over 32 million to 70 million.

Politically, countries like Ghana and Guinea and others were assisted by Liberia to gain independence from their colonial masters. Additionally, Liberia became a founding member of the UN, AU, and ECOWAS as indicated by Sawyer (2008) and Kieh (2012). This means that Liberia was economically and politically successful but again, the massive revenue acquired did not produce basic development to raise the human condition.

Furthermore, Runn-Marcos et al. (2005) asserted that the government was accused for political repression as the country was ran by a one-party system from1955 to 1971 with massive rights violations and the absence of local leadership and good governance. Thus, the indigenous felt that the President created terror and oppression for them. After Tubman's death in 1971, his Vice-President Tolbert took over and introduced policies to eliminate political terrors and corruption (Sawyer, 2008). The author contended that these policies helped to eliminate bureaucracy in government and corruption which resulted to massive increases in economic growth (Sawyer, 2008). Accordingly, Dolo (1996) contended that Liberian imports rose from $70 million in 1971

to $156M in 1977 and exports rose from $246M in 1971 to $537M in 1979. The

campaign also in raising money to carry out rural development according to Dolo.

However, just as in the previous government, these economic and political

successes, as well as poverty and illiteracy were on the rise in Liberia in the Tolbert led

government (Runn-Marcos, et al., 2005). This means again, the increase of economic

worth and improve political system were destroyed by dishonest government leaders that

led Liberia to the same bad governance in the past.

Additionally, Sawyer (1996) indicated that 74% of Liberia people earned less than

$50 monthly while the education was just for the settlers. Sawyer claimed that the

government behaviors led to drastic increased of hatred towards the government which

also led to massive grassroots organizations to gained popularity and organized

opposition toward the government. Additionally, a violent military coup by military junta

in 1980 was successful in bringing down the democratic government (Sawyer, 1996).

Thus, the priorities of the government clearly changed since it was a military government

and not democratic.

As in the democratic governments in the past, the military government was also

accused of many human rights and majority of government officials were accused of

wrecking the economy including unlimited corruption (Sawyer, 2008). Unfortunately,

according to the author, the nation debt rose from $556 million in 1980 to over $1.1B in

1989. Once again, hatred towards the government grew and the government became

unpopular.

The unpopularity of the Doe's led military government led to a rebel invasion in December of 1989 (Runn-Marcos, et al., 2005). During the same period, a local paper reported that Liberia's democracy was under attack. However, this invasion brought Mr. Charles Taylor to power based on his control of most parts of the country, including the lucrative areas. Also, as reported, Taylor has stolen over $422 million (Steinberg, 2009). Also, Taylor was accused of invading neighboring countries where many human rights violations were committed (Sawyer, 2008). These allegations suggested the critical need for international military intervention which included indictment for humanity crimes committed by Taylor leading to his imprisonment.

Postwar Reconstruction of Liberia

In 2003, the need to address and end the Liberia civil conflict became a plan for West African leaders which was supported and back by the United States and UN General Assembly despite of the many challenges to restore peace and democracy in Liberia. McDonough (2008) argued that postwar reconstruction and stability remain elusive goals for many African countries which include the nation of Liberia. Additionally, Boas (2009) also acknowledged that the international communities continue to make a massive plan for Liberia. This resulted to the deployment of ECOMIL, a West African Military Force which was backed and supported by United Nations to enforce peace (Boas, 2009). Also, ECOMIL was mandated to protect the interim government and prepare the way for more International interventions. Accordingly, Boas (2009) indicated that the Interim Government took office in October 2003 and UNMIL was able to carry peacekeeping, civilian policing, and socio-economic assistance functions in support of

Liberia's transition. Adhering to the mandate of the Accra Peace Accord, presidential, representatives, and senatorial elections were held in 2005 with Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, 67 years emerging as President defeating George Weah after a run-off in November of the same years.

However, the newly first democratic elected female president recognized many challenges in rebuilding a country devastated by war and claimed that the new government needed to implement drastic policies for recoveries and create massive opportunities for all (McDonough, 2008). Liberia's citizens, like some third world countries, continue to suffer from political marginalization and the lack of recognition and political participation of citizens continue to affect development and growth in rural cities (Sawyer, 2008). The need for new directives reform in governing after 14 years of wars in Liberia is crucial and policy that will potentially enhance citizens' participation and increase good governance are imperative.

The Perception of Decentralization Policy

Decentralization in the political context means the transferring of power to local territories to determine policies, participate in decision-making, and development (Tambulasi & Kayuni, 2007). Decentralization is conceptualized when political power is shared between national and local agencies; in addition, local powers are substantial in both number and importance (Tambulasi & Kayuni, 2007). The authors stated that by general definition, decentralization provides and gives locals/citizens the freedom to initiative their local affairs. In furtherance, from an administrative and economic perspective, Chattopadhyay (2012) argued that decentralization exists when a centralized

government delegates authority to regional officers, who then have the power to make certain important decisions in the context of resources and services management and deliverance.

In connection to the above definitions and concepts, Chattopadhyay (2012) offered that the process of decentralization is an effective way of gaining citizen and stakeholder involvement in the political and democratic decision-making process of the nation at both local and national levels. The voice in the formulation and implementation of public policies is a crucial factor in decentralization framework the author concluded. When citizens participate in an organized structure, there is a high level of productivity and performance (Zaccaro, 2007). The major goal is to provide inclusive and participatory opportunities for citizens.

It also provides appropriate accountability of governments at both local and national levels (Chattopadhyay, 2012). A decentralized government becomes more responsive and attentive to citizens' desires and becomes more effective in delivering services and goods to the people (Zaccaro, 2007). Furthermore, the process itself increases the ability of everyone under a constituted government to hold local politicians and government officials accountable regarding local and national resources and services.

A political theorist, Pankaj (2010) conceptualized decentralization like the previous author's view when Pankaj offers that political decentralization is considered as the bedrock of participatory democracy, and it produces good governance that champions and promotes accountability, transparency, and legitimacy within a nation. Also, based on economic theory, Pankaj argues that a decentralization governance system provides

efficient and speedy ways to deliver public goods and services with fewer transaction

costs. Citizens are always the best judge of their interests (Pankaj, 2010), and the

preference given to the voice of people ensures democratic weight.

The author outlines some positive outcomes of decentralization governance based

on data from three countries that formulated and implemented a decentralization

governance system:

- According to the nation of Bolivia, the decentralization framework included

  the transferring of local resources including investments to the poorer

  districts; transferring of investments and the accessibility of resources to local

  people; and shifting more investments from economic infrastructure to social

  and human capital development and improvement at local levels.

- In the case of Uganda, the major achievement of a decentralization system

  included major improvements in education which includes universal primary

  education, the abolition of school fees, and more funding for education in both

  rural and urban areas in Uganda.

- And third, in the context of India, the decentralization system formed part of

  the national constitution which obligates most of the local States to follow the

  minimum constitutional requirements; however, the national government

  remained reluctant to transfer power to the local governments.

In addition to these countries mentioned Cabrero-Mendoza (2000) states that the

nation of Mexico transitioned toward democratization comprises of three important

aspects. These aspects include: The end of the institutionalized one-party system and rule,

the economic liberalization, and the professionalization and decentralization of public policy making to strengthen state capacity and opportunities for governance. These factors ensure the success and progressiveness of the decentralization governance in Mexico.

The Perception of Decentralization as an Intervention

Exploring the perception of decentralization, Taylor (2007) described a decentralization policy as an intervention which can enhance citizens' participation and increase good governance. Similarly, the World Bank (2001) urged its member countries to develop strong decentralization policies based on the empirical evidence that a decentralization policy brings local government and citizens closer together.

As Kiwanuka (2012) also claims that the political motivation for a decentralization policy is to enhance democracy, promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity, as well as participation of citizens in public management. Nevertheless, while recognizing there are still some challenges of decentralization policies many countries are faced with; however, most of the advantages of decentralization policies can be broadly captured as improved citizenry participation and representation, efficiency, good governance and equity (Witesman & Wise, 2009). These outcomes are highly associated with economic development and poverty alleviation.

In advancing the discussion, Faguet (2012) also perceived a decentralization policy as: (a) to improve accountability, responsiveness, and increase citizenry participation (b) to improve political stability with local authority structure, and (c) to

transfer certain central powers to locals' authorities for the promotion of fast growth and development.

However, it is worth mentioning that the implementation of a decentralization governing system can pose many challenges to countries and/or governments. Additionally, it can create more complexities for governments, especially in most African countries, due to the transition from centralization to decentralization, like Liberia's 171 years of a centralized governing system, also considering that complexity will always exist for leaders who desire a change.

Nevertheless, Olson and Eoyang (2001) stated that the diversities of ideas should not undermine changes for citizens' participation and good governance to be achieved but rather facilitate the change process. Despite these positive outcomes of political decentralization, there remain numerous challenges and obstacles that undermine decentralization and good governance efforts. Some of these obstacles are identified in the case studies below beginning with the challenges of decentralization policy.

Challenges of Decentralization

Despite of the positive perception of decentralization policy offered above, it is useful to indicate some obstacles that also have the potential to undermine the effectiveness of decentralization at both local and national levels. As in many nations, good governance continues to remain the main goal for a democratic government; however, decentralization policy continues to be challenged and yet to produce sustainable results. These case studies below have been identified to point out some of

the major obstacles that have the potential to undermine the implementation of effective decentralization policy:

Case Study 1: The State of Pakistan

The case of Pakistan was examined by Haider and Badami (2010) where they offer that local governance in the state of Pakistan has been the most controversial topic since Pakistan's independence. As they recorded, local governments were used as instruments to legitimize the non-representative regimes at the federal level. In previous decades, the British colonialists created the system of local governments to create more political loyalty thereby accomplishing their aims. This idea was also adopted by Pakistani military regimes for many years. The authors further offered that when democracy was restored in the nation of Pakistan, efforts to include local governance in the political process became more and more challenging, and in some areas impossible. Additionally, as efforts moved towards decentralized governance, the country became more challenging with major obstacles such as: Lack of good governance, abused of state power, and poor management of public resources. Additionally, the physical conditions of the State made situations worse for an effective and efficient local governance process.

Accordingly, the streets in Pakistan were littered with waste, drains were overflowing with sewage, communities were flooded after rainfall, traffic congestion, and violent crime in cities on the increase, and lack of rule and respect for law. Moreover, the government divested from or was no longer able to offer and maintain adequate water supply, sanitation, electricity, reliable mass transit, good quality and affordable primary education or health care. Affordable health care, public transit, security, and primary and

secondary education were all in the hands of the private sector (Haider & Badami, 2010).

Nevertheless, these services come with high expense and affordability was only for a

small group of people in closed communities while most of the people, specifically the

poor and minorities, were subjected to sub-standard services for primary and secondary

education, water supply, and public transit in Pakistan; specifically the low rate of

employment of young people and women, inadequate local mechanisms, and the collapse

of civilian institutions were some barriers to local governance.

Case Study 2: Malawi

The case of Malawi begins by providing evidences of decentralization offering

many opportunities for adequate democratic practices and good governance outcomes in

Malawi (Tambulasi and Kayuni, 2007). Additionally, the authors stated that the Malawi's

Government decision to decentralize the government's machinery was to create local

governments and a good governance system in its territories in Malawi. Malawi, in 1998,

formulated decentralization policies and adopted them to sustain democratic and political

components of the decentralization at all levels of governing in the country (Tambulasi &

Kayuni, 2007). The main aim of the decentralization policy in Malawi was to distribute

equally the decision-making process between the local and national governments,

establish strong local governments, and give locals full participation in the political

process.

However, the government was forced to put in place specific measures to resolve

the problems of corruption and abuse of state resources in the Malawi's local

governments. The governments in the cities listed below were pointed out for a high level

of corruption and abuse of power and resources. The city of Blantyre, Nkhata Bay, Mwanza Districts, and several other governments suffered from slow growth and development as the result of these obstacles. According to Tambulasi et al. (2007), corruption became the main obstacle to decentralization, which drastically paralyzed the operations and development of local governance in these cities.

In addition to corruption in these areas, there was financial mismanagement, low-quality infrastructure, as well as loss of donor and citizen confidence and trust. As believed by some public policies experts, a decentralization governing system in any nation will facilitate the participation of citizens in politics at the grassroots level and in the national decision-making process; it will involve the transfer of power, specified administrative responsibility and functions to locals within the government's bureaucracy system (Tambulasi & Kayuni, 2007). The cases reviewed underscore the importance of local citizens' participation in the decentralization process. Decentralized local governing is critical for the enhancement of democratic values and practices and good governance in any nation.

However, and considering the decentralization efforts that provide many opportunities for equal balance of power and citizens' full participation in decision-making processes, the cases also present some significant obstacles that need to be overcome, specifically in local governance, for decentralization to be sustained, effective, and successful. For example, the efforts by the Malawi Local Government Association (MALGA) to promote and strengthen local governments within and outside the country in order to address critical issues in the Malawi decentralization structure resulting from

major corrupt practices which were highlighted. It is believed that decentralized

governance is always embraced by people because it creates sustainable hope for both

local and national governments to work together for democratic and political stability and

development.

However, as in the case of Malawi, the past 4 years of decentralized governance

proved otherwise due to corruption and abuse of public funds and power (Tambulasi &

Kayuni, 2007). Moreover, the decentralization process degenerated into unwanted waste

and the abuse of public resources as in the case of Pakistan the authors claimed. These

obstacles and unfortunate occurrences undermine good governance, adequate democratic

practices, and development at all levels and any effort to implement decentralization

politics that includes citizens' participation.

Case Study 3: Zimbabwe

Another example to be considered in addition to the cases presented is the nation

of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's political transition was only on the surface (Wellz, 2007).

This is a good example of unsuccessful decentralization and good governance politics.

The backdrop of this faulty form of power sharing new government established in the

country became unsuccessful in the first term of operation (Welz, 2007). Some of the

problems Welz alluded to were continued rivalry and a lack of commitment of the

President and the party who altered power-sharing in the government. If these actors were

not ready, they shouldn't have used decentralization politics as a political gambling

machine.

The ruling party and the President managed to secure key positions in the new government for their cronies and control of the government. Their plan also provides effective ways of service delivery to citizens and in decision making as related to local affairs (Welz, 2007). The government provided many opportunities for collaboration and cooperation among all stakeholder that could have led to good governance and effective service and goods delivery to people. However, the government became paralyzed by corruption and abuse of state power by the leaders.

Case Study Analysis and Lessons Learned

While decentralization has been glorified by many scholars as a catalyzer to good governance and citizens' participation, these cases presented offered some major obstacles to adequate decentralization of governance. The commonality that exists among these cases is the mismanagement of resources through bad governance, corruption, and the abuse of state power.

In the case of Pakistan, public services were not affordable due to bad governance and services like primary and secondary education, water supply, and public transit were in the hands of the elite with economic power (Haider & Badami, 2010). In addition, there were poor economic growth, limited employment of young people and women were outlined by these authors. Also, in the case of Malawi, corruption and mismanagement of public fund endangered Malawi's decentralization agenda. Thus, Tambulasi et al., (2007) contended that the government was forced to put in place measures to deal with corruption, and abuse of state resources in local government to increase operations, productivity, and development in local government.

Finally, in Zimbabwe, the control of key position in addition to corruption, mismanagement, and abuse of state power were indicated as major obstacles (Welz, 2007). The author claimed that the ruling party and the President managed to secure key positions in the new government for their cronies and control of the government. Again, these obstacles outlined by Welz (2007) and Tambuasi (2007) paralyzed these countries' decentralization efforts.

Thus, as Liberia embarked on decentralization policy implementation to potentially increase economic growth and development, political stability, and equal distribution of state resources and services, these obstacles listed above must be giver critical attention as they could undermine and underpin the implementation of Liberia's decentralization policy. Also, there must be adequate strategies to overcome these obstacles to secure Liberia's decentralization policy implementation. When these obstacles are managed effectively by implementing measures will enable Liberia to reap the full dividends of decentralization benefits.

Government Reformation

In the context of Liberia's civil war and 171 years of centralized governance suggests that economic and political reforms will produce the comprehensive paradigm shift that encompasses the nation's reality (Taylor, 2004). Based on this notion, it can be deduced that there must be some paradigm shifts which include moving the political structure from centralization to democratization. There must also be a shift from power imbalances to power sharing with the inclusion of locals' citizens.

Lederach (2002) claimed that society must transform the energy itself to create more useful and productive directions and change. This suggests that empowerment should occur to involves those with common purpose (Montel, 2001) in decision-making processes. However, applying reform processes in Liberia becomes a major challenge due to Liberia's long period of 171 years of a centralized system of leadership that for the most part alienated citizens in politics. However, this can change by political reformation.

Thus, change must therefore serve as an intervention that includes moving from instability to effective democracy; from non-participation to participation. This will also ensure that the emancipation of local governance and inclusion of citizens will produce a successful decentralization policy and proper management of democracy. However, because this study seeks to examine the proposition of decentralization, it is important to acknowledge that the cases above present mixed assertions. Certainly, strong decentralization policies produce economic and political stabilities in some countries and transformed institutions; on the other hand, corruption undermined the effective of decentralization in other countries.

Nevertheless, some governments around the world have been responsible for regulating services to citizens (Rowse, 2010). Additionally, in these countries, Rowse asserted that private institutions continue to depend on governments for support to serve citizens at local. It is this kind of reform in governing that the nation of Liberia needs to adopt despite of the challenges that are involved in this reform. Additionally, society must recognize the complexity of implementing reform due to factor as: a centralized

system of government resulting in bad governance, corruption, and mismanagement of democracy.

Based on this notion, it is logical to provide an explanation on how governments can overcome the complexity of reform to manage democracy effectively. It is argued by policymakers that some governments must overcome complexities and failures, so that survival and self-renewal can produce prosperity and development (Hamilton, 2004). Additionally, Weick and Sutcliffe (2000) argue that leaders must develop skills and the expertise to identify failures and address them timely. This means that organizations and their leaders must provide an environment where citizens must buy-in to the reform process by recognizing themselves as key contributors to the institution of progress and decision making. Thus, the involvement must include citizens participation from the beginning of the of the plan through its implementation.

It is useful to understand that citizens' participation and representation in local affairs is not a smooth process as it is always perceived by many. In some cases, there may be some resistance, disagreement, and objection (ONI Online, 2009). Nevertheless, resistance and disagreement within the organization should not be a negative obstacle but must be recognized and treated as positive feedback within the organization change process (Dym, 1999). It creates the institution conscious of defining the institution's values, mission, goals, and developing plan.

Finally, citizenry's participation and roles in local and national development are important because they ensure the greater benefits of collaboration, cooperation, and the coordination of the decision- making process. It guarantees fast growth, development,

citizens' confidence and trust. Moreover, it creates tangible opportunity for power sharing among stakeholders. The balance of power is critical in sustaining citizens' opportunity to participate in political and decision-making processes. Nutt (2009) also offered that when collaboration, cooperation, and coordination are considered in management and planning processes, it fosters unity among stakeholders with the organization's goals and missions. Likewise, the organization can maintain and sustain competitive advantage.

Perception of Citizens' Participation

As previously indicated, citizen's participation means involvement and equal voice in political processes for all citizens both in national and local governments to make meaningful contributions in decision-making (Gilbert et al., 2004). Antwi-Boateng (2011) agreed by adding that the process must include public recognition of citizens at all level which is critical in democracy.

Moreover, Sawyer (2008) argued that historically, political participation of citizens has been limited due to centralized government structure which ran the country's political and economic affairs since its existence and independence in 1847. In fact, the Author claimed that Liberia's locals have always been invisible and controlled by the centralized governance system. In the same connection, Antwi-Boateng (2011) stressed that when local citizens contribute to development at both local levels it creates good governance.

Additionally, when speaking about citizens' participation, it refers to people's rights to legitimately take part in an event and activity (Spear, 2004). Thus, citizens'

participation is a human rights issues and denial of that right can be considered as a human right violation. However, after many years of violation of people rights to participation, citizens could vote in 1944 which elected President Tubman over 100 years after Liberian independence (Gilbert et al., 2004). Prior to this date, only the elites could vote and occupy political leadership and locals were not allowed based stereotypes that stand in the way to participation.

As described to them, local citizens were traditionally known for their hospitality and their skills with cultural arts and crafts (Runn-Marcos et al., 2005). However, when Doe took over in 1980, a new day dawned for the local people. During this era, local people could organize and demonstrate their rights to participate in both local and national governments politics (Runn-Marcos et al., 2005). The author pointed out that since 1980, collaboration among local citizens and the elites continues to increase and the gap and disparities between them has also narrowed.

Again, these coalitions, collaboration, and collective efforts by the elites and the local citizens were endanger by the 1989 revolution headed by Mr. Taylor from the elite class who also led the country from a centralized system of governance despite the fact his revolution started in the rural part of Liberia (Sawyer, 2008). Additionally, despite two (2) elections in 2005 and 2011 that elected Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as president, local citizens' involvement and participation, specifically in rural Liberia, continues to be a huge challenge due to the centralized governing system.

It is noticeable that Liberia has not gained access to a complete decentralized governing system. Furthermore, the 171 years of a centralized government system

continues to be the political machine of Liberia which continues to alienate local citizens'

participation and undermine the power and role of local governance in Liberia (Steinberg,

2009). This idea is supported by Antwi-Boateng (2011) as he asserted that a

decentralization policy could increase good governance which will eventually repair

Liberia's 171 years of bad governance system.

Perception of Good Governance

The description of good governance is presented in Harrold's (2009) work as, a

constituted agency, established to provide administrative supervision for fiscal and other

services delivered to citizens residing in a political geographical territory. In most

modern countries, like the United States, the author stated that local government is in the

form of county administrative structure. Currently in the United States, more than 3000

county type governments exist to provide administrative supervision have recently

received independent control over local affairs (Harrold, 2009). However, this system has

in its totality been a perfect system as the author alluded to the many changes that are

occurring within the local governance structure in some countries. In the United States,

for example, several counties have changed from the traditional commission form of

government, appointed by a centralized governing board with both administrative and

legislative powers to a manager appointed by the legislative board to formulate and

implement policies. The counties themselves have adopted an executive system that

elects executive board to administer the governing board's policy of the local

government.

In the case of Ghana, a country in West Africa, to distribute national and administrative power, 10 counties were created by the national government. Each of these counties, as described by Owusu-Ansah (2009) is controlled by a regional assembly. Each of these regions is led by a regional executive, who is appointed by the President; however, under the regional level are district assemblies, majorities of whom are democratically elected by local citizens.

Another example of good governance is the case of Uganda. The Ugandan government, an East African country, divided its administrative power into 69 districts, including the city of Kampala. According to Kasfir (2009), the districts themselves are subdivided into counties, sub counties, parishes, and villages with the residents in each village forming a village council. Within said council, a governing village committee is elected. Subsequently, the village committee elections are held every four years and one-third of the positions in each committee are reserved for women to create gender balance (Kasfir, 2009). The districts become fully responsible for local public services through funding from the central government. However, the local districts also raise some revenues through local taxes and natural resources (Kasfir, 2009). Most importantly, the author states that some smaller units within the districts have some autonomous powers and the right to retain a portion of the revenues collected from local taxes and natural resources.

While it is true that local governance has some differences or forms based on the political and constitution of a nation; however, the framework of political decentralization is present in each of these local government structures. These cases

presented above revealed that the transferring of political and administrative power by national or federal government to local government is the core of decentralization politics which enhance good governance. Additionally, whatever form of decentralization is used, it underscores the relevant nature of political decentralization that supports good governance and citizens' political participation.

Theoretical Framework: The Polarities of Democracy Model

To comprehensively present the perceptions of decentralization policy, the management of the polarities of democracy model by Benet (2006, 2012 & 2013) has been employed and applied to this study. Johnson (1996) who first developed the conceptual framework of the model asserted that the aim of the model is to successfully maximize the positive outcomes while minimizing the negative outcomes. Based on this model, Benet (2006) created the polarities of democracy model and concluded that the model promotes and bettered democratization in order to overpower oppression, especially in the workplace and in society.

Benet (2012) advanced the model by asserting that democracy has now become globally the cornerstone and intervention for many problems faced by society. The author further emphasized that people around the globe have embraced democracy to bring positive social change by addressing environmental, economic, and militaristic challenges. As Dinkelaker's (1997) consistently argued that there is no universal agreement on a definition of democracy that can guide social change efforts; however, Benet argues that the polarities of democracy can offer that unifying definition but did not negate that democracy over the years has not been fully achieved due to its

misunderstanding. Benet continues by offering that part of the problem that leads to the misunderstandings and misinterpretations of democracy is that some research or literatures have characterized democracy solely in a Western context and culture. Thus, the strength of his polarities of democracy model is its universal application based on the evolutionary development concept beginning with its origin in Africa and not just out of Western context.

Arguably, there is no doubt that democracy is a very complex concept, especially from the international perspective (Dinkelaker, 1997). Therefore, it is offered that democracy should not be conceptualized universally considering the diversities of cultures, religions, institutions and governments around the world (Dinkelaker, 1997). Nevertheless, Benet (2012) and Johnson (1996) have argued that democracy itself is rich because it ought to hold government and institution to higher standard to provide and secure citizens' freedom, justice and equality which ultimately foster social change.

In support of this view, Rawls (1985) offered that fundamentally, democratic concepts offer some major principles, and among these principles are few popular and basic forms of democracy and each of these must exist in a political system for it to be a true democracy. Thus, the principles of democracy involve direct, representative and constitutional participation (Rawl, 1955). Rawls continues that direct democracy is a form of government in which the right to participate in making political decisions is exercised directly by all citizens under majority rule.

Rawls (1955) and Machan (2005) believed that democracy allows citizens to rule through free and fair elections and other forms of participation. The idea that the people

are the ultimate authority and the source of the authority of government is fundamental to democracy (Rawls, 1955; Maddox, 1985). Additionally, democracy offers political equality to all citizens (Maddox, 1985). Benet (2013) offered that democracy embraces a profound insight into human social framework and welcomes the fundamental role individual and society play in government.

Subsequently, Benet (2012 & 2013) argued that the polarities of democracy model can provide a unifying framework that can be utilized for effective social change. He claims that the model can also create hope by addressing the threats human face and build healthy and sustainable communities. Based on his view, Benet categorized the model into 10 elements, organized as five polarity pairs: freedom and authority, justice and due process, diversity and equality, human rights and communal obligations, and participation and representation. In each of these pairs, he stated there are positive and negative aspects as eluded above; however, the objective of the model is to successfully manage the polarities to earn positive result and reduce the negative aspects.

Thus, to adequately assess the effectiveness of citizens' participation and good governance, the polarities of democracy (participation and representation) model offered by Benet (2013) was employed. As Benet argued that representative and participatory democracy are not alternatives, but complement one another; meaning, a citizen cannot abandon one for the other. Both participation and representation are equally important for effective democracy to be sustained. Consequently, governments and nations must identify effective ways for citizen engagement in decision-making and it must always remain an enhancing goal to be achieved; thus, enabling governments to tackle and

overcome complexity and changes in sustaining democracy and providing goods and services to its citizens and communities.

The polarities of democracy model is scholarly situated in the field of public policy to provide knowledge and understanding when it is properly applied to social studies. Strouble (2015), who applied this model in his work asserted that the polarities of democracy model helped explain the management of relationship between democratic characteristics so that organization or community can gain positive results. Applying the model to Racism Vs Social Capital study, the model was used as a lens for understanding how improving democratic processes mediates racism as a structural barrier to the access of social resources and justices. Additionally, Tobor's (2014) application of the model offered an extensive and in-depth understanding and assessed the effectiveness of amnesty program in restoring peace and stability in the Delta area. He offered that the model unveiled the most important content of restored justice, healthy, humane, and sustainable development to the people of Niger Delta region.

Therefore, the model was applicable and applied to the Liberia context. Applying Benet's (2006; 2012 & 2013) model to the nation of Liberia, Liberians for many years have also been solely relying on political representation which has not given them the full political benefit, growth, and development. This suggests that citizens must rely both on participation and representation in decision making and not just representation (Benet, 2013). As Benet asserted, many citizens continue to abandon their responsibilities for meaningful and successful participatory processes that provide equal representation in decision making. However, Benet (2013) argued that the realization by the political

institution and government that meaningful participation is critical in decision making and that it serves as the catalyzer and essential tool to true democracy and political stability when the polarities of democracy is managed effectively.

Based on these notions, there was a connection between the concepts of decentralization policy and the Polarity of Participation and Representation model. Effective decentralization policy can be the result of the proper management of the polarities of democracy which is believed by Benet (2012) that when government or institution functions as a decentralized system, then potentially the Polarities of democracy becomes possible and effective. The common line remains that if the polarities of democracy is managed effectively, citizens will achieve high political benefits, fast growth, and development.

Based on this conceptualization, a changed process can undo the 171 years of a centralized governing system that has been perceived as the root cause of bad governance and poor citizens' participation. The polarity of participation and representation element, one of the pillars of the polarities of democracy will uncover how decentralization policy could maximize citizens' participation and increase good governance in Liberia. It is also important to connect and understand that the proper management of the polarities of democracy (polarity of participation and representation), as stated previously, can provide positive reform and change to produce healthy, sustainable, and strong political systems in Liberia. Applying the model provides a comprehensive understanding of how a decentralization policy could provide good governance and increase citizens' participation.

Synthesis of the Literature

The literature outlines first the historical context of Liberia from its occupation to independence. It also reviewed the political, economic, and formation of governments for the most part of the 171-year period. Most importantly, the overview of the long brutal internecine on-and-off-again civil war that engulfed Liberia for the most part of 14 years, from 1989 to 2003, left devastation and destruction. The 1980 coup led by Samuel Doe increased the division between the elite and indigenous, even though the coup created more opportunities for local government participation in politics.

The literature offers a tangible foundation for the study that investigates citizens' participation in Liberian decentralization politics. It also developed an understanding of the theoretical framework of change which is a key in Liberia's reality. The relevance of the theoretical framework in the literature is based on Liberia's historical context of a chaotic and devastating nature in addition to 171 years of centralized governing leadership which has offered less economic growth, bad governance, and alienation of citizens from political democratic processes.

This suggests that implementation of a decentralization policy will help address Liberia's reality and potentially enhance citizens' participation in the decision-making process at all levels. Moreover, the literature revealed some successes and positive outcomes of a decentralized system of governance that allows local governance participation in politics.

Also, as indicated, most of Liberia's past decades were interrupted with hostilities and destabilization which suggests the need for peace and the restoration of democracy and political governance which was backed by the UN General Assembly and the Security Council. This plan was considered successful at some level. However, the 171-year-old centralized system of governing that gave the national government all the power and alienated local governance and citizens' political participation. One of the main hindrances to good governance is the lack of citizens' participation in decision making at grassroots and local levels.

Moreover, this form of government has created more power imbalances, social injustice, mismanagement of natural resources in rural areas, and denied local participation in decision making processes; in addition to high poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy rates. These factors are classified as the mismanagement of the polarities of democracy. Subsequently, the management of these polarities becomes more and more imperative and a catalyzer to providing good governance.

On the other hand, while it is true that the literature provided significance understanding, background, and detail about the nation of Liberia, good governance, decentralization policy, and citizen participation; however, there remains the need to understand how decentralization can enhance good governance and citizens participate in the context of Liberia. Additionally, despite of the strength of the literature review, there are weaknesses that need to be mentioned because it will also grant this study the opportunity to address them.

Thus, the gaps identified in the literature were the lack of substantial knowledge on how citizens can participate effectively in decision making and how to increase good governance in Liberia. Also, the absence of interventions to overcome the barriers of citizens' participation, as well as achieve good governance with the implementation of a decentralization policy in Liberia were lacking in the literature.

Also, the absence of strong policies and regulations to guide the implementation of a decentralization policy adequately was not identified in the literature. It is these gaps that this study seeks to fill from a public policy perspective. However, while the gaps in literature do not have any negative impact on this study; it is worth mentioning its imposition on the study.

McDonough (2008) alluded to some of the impositions when he offers that postwar reconstruction and stability remain elusive factors for many African nations. Additionally, the political and socioeconomic preconditions of African civil wars have often persisted after the end of open hostilities and have frustrated regional and international efforts at peace building (McDonough, 2008). However, the author suggests that a decentralization policy is always a key catalyst and an important policy intervention for government and society. The World Bank (Report, 2000) also claims that fiscal decentralization when carefully implemented, can decrease political instability, increase government efficiency, and contribute to the overall level of welfare.

These views offered significant opportunity to consider the importance of decentralization governance for a nation to achieve fast growth and development. Furthermore, decentralization as stated in the literature provides many opportunities for

adequate democratic practices and good governance outcomes when power is transferred

from centralized governance to a decentralized system (Tambulasi & Kayuni, 2007). The

Authors claimed that the main aim of decentralization policy is to distribute equally the

decision-making process between the local and national governments, establishment of

strong local governments and to give locals full participation in the political process.

However, the issue of how a nation with a 171-year history of centralized

governance can make a successful transition from centralized governance to

decentralization is absent in these authors' exposition. Additionally, the interventions and

policy strategy of good governance are also lacking in the literature. Based on the

findings presented, the need for adequate interventions to address these barriers and

obstacles is critical for the full achievement of decentralization components.

The case of Liberia's decentralization policy itself, designed by the Governance

Commission of Liberia-(GC), acknowledged that since 1847 and throughout the history

of Liberia, governance and public administration have remained highly centralized and

controlled mainly by institutions and structures of the central state (Governance

Commission of Liberia, 2012). Based on the document reviewed, some assertions can be

made as: This form of governance has led to public policy vulnerabilities and has allowed

inadequate policy for the establishment of a system that will encourage strong

participation of local governance.

Additionally, Sawyer (2008) indicated that the centralized system of governance

in Liberia has impeded citizenry participation in the decision-making, and local initiatives

have been limited. Finally, that this has led to the need for provision of public goods and

services, for greater accountability and transparency in the management of public resources, and to increase good governance, as well as economic growth and development. Moreover, as political decentralization has been perceived as the instrument to increase citizens' opportunity and ability under the constituted government, it must also hold politicians and government officials accountable for local and national resources to eliminate corruption and somewhat weak version of the decentralization.

This idea is engraved in the views of Abdulbaki (2008) who argued that decentralization is necessary, but not enough for change. Considering what Abdulbaki has acknowledged, that decentralization politics has been helpful in democratic political sputum, the author also invokes conditional variables such as: people participation, size, factor endowments, level of development, and political stability as critical elements to ensure effective and sustainable decentralization efforts. Relevant to the conditions put forward by Abdulbaki with the specific mechanism emphasized, yet the core value of decentralization policy remains, citizens exercising the right to channel their own affairs, and goods and services delivered efficiently and effectively. Exploring this subject further, the qualitative method has been selected as the strategy to provide an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the study.

Qualitative method was employed by all the authors to provide knowledge of decentralization framework. This method employed strengthened the validity of the literature. The method used in the literature provided support to the study and give theoretical foundation in guiding the study. However, there are gaps and weaknesses in the literature that need to be mentioned because it will also grant this study the

opportunity to address them. The methodology will help to reveal those gaps. Therefore, if these gaps are not addressed, the study will be incomplete and has no impact or significance in the field of public policy and political leadership.

Also, while it is true that the literature provided significance understanding, background, and detail of citizens' participation, good governance and decentralization policy, there remains a need to understand how local governance and citizens can participate in decentralization politics in the context of Liberia.

Thus, the lesson learned highlighted that the absent of interventions to overcome obstacles and barriers of decentralization policy could ultimately undermine citizens' participation and good governance. Also, if these gaps are not addressed, this study will be incomplete, and said gaps will remain in the field of politics and public policy. While it is true that the weakness in the literature do not have any negative impact on this study; however, it worth mentioning its imposition on the study. Also, the absent of strong policies and regulatory standards to guide institution and government to protect the decentralization policy and process were not addressed in literature.

McDonough (2008) offers that postwar reconstruction and stability remain elusive factors for many African nations which include Liberia. Additionally, the political and socioeconomic preconditions of African civil wars have often persisted after the end of open hostilities and have frustrated regional and international efforts at peace building (McDonough, 2008). The author suggests that public sector decentralization is always a catalyzer and an important policy intervention for international organizations and society.

Additionally, decentralization has the ability to decrease political instability and increase efficiency in government when it implemented properly.

McDonough's (2008) view offered a significant opportunity to consider the importance of decentralization governance for nation to achieve fast growth and development; however, the author comes short by not offering and addressing how country like Liberia can make a shift from 167 years of centralization governance to decentralization to experience fast growth, reduces poverty, increase political stability, and economic development.

Furthermore, decentralization governance as stated in the literature provides many opportunities for adequate democratic conduct practices and good governance outcomes when power is transferred from centralized governance to decentralized system (Tambulasi & Kayuni, 2007). The main aim of decentralization policy in any nation is to distribute equally the decision-making process between the local and national governments, establishment of strong local governments and to give locals full participation in the political process (Tambulasi & Kayuni, 2007). The major goal of decentralization politics was defined both implicit and explicit in the literature which is to provide inclusive and participatory opportunities for citizens and/or everyone in decision making process. It also provides appropriate accountability of government at both local and nation levels (Chattopadhyay, 2012). A decentralized government becomes more responsive and attentive to citizens' desires and become more effective in delivering services and goods to the people (Taylor, 2008). Better public policy also enhances more efficient allocation of resources and proper incentives for local governance.

The literature also acknowledges that there is a difference between the two systems of government; as a decentralized system of local public goods provision is generally better at reflecting popular preferences than is a centralized one. Scholars also argue that a centralized government often experience high level of vulnerability because there are less decision-making points and veto-players to control political and economic processes (Drezner, 2001). However, offering better strategies or interventions to address and overcome these vulnerabilities is lacking in the literature.

In the case of Liberia, the Good Governance Commission of Liberia-(GGC) acknowledged that since 1847 and throughout the history of Liberia, governance and public administration have remained highly centralized and controlled mainly by institutions and structures of the central state (GGC of Liberia, 2012). This form of governance has led to public policy vulnerabilities and has allowed inadequate policy for the establishment of system that will encourage strong participation of local governance (Decentralization Document, 2012).

Additionally, over the years, the centralized system of governance in Liberia has impeded citizenry participation in decision-making process and local initiative has been limited or not existing at all. This has indeed led to the need for provision of public goods and services, for greater accountability and transparency in the management of public resources, and to increase economic growth and development (GGC of Liberia, 2012). On the other hand, the strategies to test and evaluate the proposed decentralization policies remain a significance component which is absence in the literature but need to be addressed.

Finally, if the process of political decentralization must increase the ability of local governance under the constituted government to hold local politicians and government officials accountable for local and national resources, and eliminate corruption, a somewhat weak version of the decentralization is exemplified by Drezner (2001), who argues that decentralization is necessary, but not enough for change. Considering what Drezner has acknowledged that decentralization politics as being helpful in democratic political sputum, the author also invokes conditional variables such as people participation, size, factor endowments, level of development, and political stability.

Despite of all the conditions put forward by this theorist, and the specific mechanism emphasized, yet the core of the decentralization argument remains how and what are the interventions needed to overcome these barriers and obstacles. Based on these gaps identified in the literature, a methodological framework is designed to address these gaps and weaknesses found in the literature. The qualitative method and case study approach will be utilized to address how decentralization policy could enhance citizens' participation and increase good governance in Liberia which is discussed in-depth in the next Chapter 3, the research method.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

This study investigated how decentralization policy could enhance citizens'

participation and increase good governance in Liberia. Qualitative method with case

study approach was used to conduct an in-depth exploration of the subject. Frankfort-

Nachmias and Nachmias (2008) claimed that the qualitative method as an inquiry method

is deeply rooted in the assumption that people construct social reality, and that the

qualitative method helps form this reality into meanings and interpretations. This method

also discovered the meanings and interpretations by studying cases in their natural

settings.

 Subsequently, the chapter provided an overview of the research design and

rationale, and the research tradition. Additionally, the chapter also covered boundaries of

qualitative tradition in general, the rationale for choosing the case study, and the role of

the researcher. This section provides an in-depth background of the methodology which

includes participant selection logic, the sample strategy and size, the rationale for the

sampling method. The data collection method, and data analysis plan and method are

presented in this section. Finally, the issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures are

presented in this chapter.

The Research Design and Rationale

The qualitative method was selected to conduct this study. As Yin (2012) stated,

when a study involves contemporary issues and subjects, then the qualitative method is

appropriate. Since this study examined citizens' participation and good governance in

Liberia, the qualitative method was the best fit.

Decentralization policy has become the Government of Liberia's current political agenda after over 171 years of a centralized system of governance. Therefore, using the qualitative method to conduct this study provided in-depth knowledge of how decentralization policy is perceived as a prescription to enhance participation and good governance in Liberia. Furthermore, by using qualitative method, the data collection process and credibility of the data collected were practical because the qualitative method revealed and provided a broad understanding of a natural phenomenon and explained the social and political issues that encompass human life (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). As Patton (2002) argued that the primary purpose of qualitative research is to provide a narrative understanding of how people make sense of their own world.

The Rationale for Qualitative Method

In exploring the rationale for using the qualitative method in this study**,** Creswell's (2009) offered that qualitative method explores what and how questions to get a deeper knowledge and understanding of an issue or a situation in social science. Thus, the focus of this study was to provide an in-depth knowledge and understanding of how people perceive a decentralization policy as a prescription to increase citizen participation and good governance in Liberia. Based on this perception, this study employed the qualitative method using case study approach as a strategy to gain understanding and gather information that addressed the research question.

The Choice for Case Study Approach

Accordingly, a case study approach was appropriate for this study based on Creswell (2009) and Yin's (1984) suggestions that case study approach as an empirical inquiry investigates contemporary issue and subject related to a real-life situation. The method uncovers and unveils the most difficult context and content to create an understanding and awareness of the main issue (Creswell, 2009). Yin goes beyond Creswell's view of defining the case study approach and offered a broader suggestion for effectively organizing and conducting case study research. Yin argued that the case study method should begin with one or two important questions, for example, how or why, and one or more units of data analysis: narrative or descriptive. Based on these ideas, I chose to conduct this study using the case study approach as the research design.

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The Research Question

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The main research question was, how can decentralization policy potentially enhance citizens' participation and increase good governance in Liberia? As Stake (2010) indicated, the research question drives the study, and based on the research question the methodological frame to conduct the study is chosen. Accordingly, the research question becomes the key catalyzer of the entire study (Maxwell, 2013). The research question shaped the methodology in that it required alignment with the selected method for conducting the study.

In addition to the primary research question stated above, five sub-questions were explored through interviews:

- When should citizens participate in government?

- Are there any obstacles to political participation in Liberia?

- How can citizens overcome these obstacles if there are any?

- Is the implementation of decentralization possible in Liberia?

- What are the anticipated benefits for political decentralization?

The Role of the Researcher

As Creswell (2009) suggested, worldviews are the general orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds. These worldviews are shaped by areas of discipline, beliefs of advisers, as well as past research experiences. Additionally, the type of beliefs held by any researcher influences the specific research method.

Based on the four worldviews (postpositivism, advocacy and participatory, constructivism, and pragmatism) listed by Patton (2012) and Creswell (2009), I have a worldview that is of advocacy and participatory approach. This means that my approach was intertwined with a political and public policy agenda. By connecting this research to politics, I saw the need for social and political reform, specifically in Liberia. The findings of this research served as an impetus for providing greater awareness on the subject, which would in turn favor social change and major political reform, especially after 171 years of centralized governing and 14 years of civil war.

In addition, substantial consideration was given to the importance of the researcher's role. In support, Stake (2010) stated that the role of the researcher in qualitative study is both personal and subjective. Thus, my role as a researcher was to integral the data collection process through interpretation, analysis, and presentation of the findings in a scholarly manner as indicated by Stake, (2010). Without any language

barriers and challenges, because I was born, grew up, and knew the spoken language of the people in Liberia, I designed the questionnaires, the protocol for the interview, selected the participants, and conducted the interviews in the language of the participants which was English. Additionally, I interpreted data, identified the major themes from the data, and reported the findings.

Researcher Bias

Since the nature of this study was qualitative with case study approach, it became imperative to recognize potential researcher bias that could negatively affect the research. Additionally, research scholars like Creswell (2009) and Yin (2012) argued that bias can affect the validity and reliability of the study. Furthermore, they also claimed that bias can distort truth; therefore, a researcher conducting a qualitative study needs to recognize biases and reduce them, or at least be aware and address them adequately.

Creswell (2009) also asserted that qualitative research requires that the researchers must conduct the study without any bias. Furthermore, since the qualitative research method utilizes predetermined procedures to collect data and produce results, Creswell contends that bias could occur in the design process; therefore, the researcher must identify ways to minimize the impact of bias on the study and address them to avoid possible damage to the study.

Accordingly, Stake (2010) offered that researchers using qualitative method must employ strategy to address bias by recognizing its presence in the study and alerting others of its existence. Thus, a researcher must provide explanation concerning any bias in the study and the plan to address it (Maxwell, 2013). As Maxwell offered, bias has

some potential threats to the trustworthiness of qualitative study, such as, the data selection process that fits existing theory, beliefs, and traditions to which a researcher maybe subscribed.

Based on the conceptions, I employed Creswell (2009), Maxwell (2013), and Stake's (2010), traditional strategies to help minimize possible bias in this research study by paying close attention to the research design plan, research question, and the interpretation of the data collected. Consequently, the above techniques offered by Stake and other researchers established the foundation of how the potential biases were addressed in this study. These strategies mentioned above enhanced the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of this study, specifically the interpretation of the data and the findings of the study.

Methodology

Population

This study took into consideration citizens live in both rural and urban areas of Liberia to be interview. The targeted population of 500 came from both government and private institutions who were knowledgeable of the subject. In the rural areas, I interviewed traditional leaders in three rural areas: Bong, Bassa, and Margibi Counties. These areas were selected due to ease of access. I am familiar with these areas and was able to move freely without huge financial burden on the study. Also, these areas selected have the same political and social structure as most of the other counties. Furthermore, when conducting the interview with traditional people, like the chief and elders, I used the "Palava Hut" setting as suggested for meetings.

The Palava Hut is an open tent located in the center of each community, symbolizing unity and used to bring community members together for dialogue and other community meetings. Every rural community in Liberia has a Palava Hut. It is believed that under the Palava Hut is where people gather to restore harmony, resolve conflicts, and resolve political and difficult issues. Nevertheless, when conducting the interview with participants, I asked for permission to schedule the interview in the area. However, as advised by the community dwellers as relates to interviewing a woman, I refrained from asking women direct questions to save face and observed other traditional norms.

Face-saving is important in Liberian society because Liberian's culture is a high-context and collectivist society where women and elders receive special treatment and respect. This concept is opposite to the norms in a society that practices individualism like the US and Europe. Moreover, since I also knew the culture, the interview questions were indirect and unstructured adhering to the approach stated above.

On the other hand, the interviews conducted in Monrovia, the Capital of Liberia, do not require adherence to these cultural norms. Therefore, I met with the participants in their offices and any area that was convenient for the participants. I refrained from going to a public place, for example restaurants and entertainment areas, to avoid interference and distraction.

Sampling Strategy and Size

The target group from which the sampling was drawn was citizens of Liberia both in urban and rural areas. The sample included both male and female who were between the ages 35 to 70 years old. Also, the participants were knowledgeable of the political,

economic, cultural and social context of Liberia and were employed in private and public

sectors. Thus, foreigners (Non-citizens of Liberia), children, or people under 35 years of

age will not participate in this study because the issues to be researched are politically

sensitive and require people who have extensive background and experience of the

political context in Liberia.

As Stake (2010) and Yin (2012) claim that the nature of qualitative research is to

provide knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon and not to generalize the study.

In addition to this idea, Patton (2002) also asserted that there is no specific rule that

govern the size of a sample in qualitative study since the sample size is dependent on

what the researcher wants to gain. Thus, a small sample was selected and provided the

data needed to gain adequate knowledge which uncovered the research problem (Patton,

2002). For this study, the sampling size was limited to only 20 to 25 persons to be

interviewed by me alone.

Additionally, categories of this sample size included five participants from the

Governance Commission, five from the Ministry of Internal Affairs while the rest to be

interviewed will include individuals (10) from the academic arena and some private

professional that knowledgeable of subject in both urban and rural communities.

The criterion set for the selection of these 20 participants ensured that they met

the requirements of the study which was in line with Creswell (2007) views that in a case

study, a small sample is generally deemed sufficient for the identification of themes and

analysis. Therefore, the criteria set ensured that the selected participants had extensive

knowledge and understanding of citizens' participation and good governance in Liberia.

Data Collection Method

Among the four common types of data collection approaches in qualitative

research (participant observation, focus groups, direct observation, and unstructured

interviews), this study employed unstructured interview as a tool to collect data. Relative

to the structured interview, it does not rely on a set of predetermined questions and most

importantly, the tool offers more flexibility to broaden the research topic in whatever   .

direction the researcher wants to focus (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). As

indicated by Patton (1990), when a researcher employs these approaches to conduct a

study, there will be more flexibility, informality, and it will allow the participants to offer

in-depth and detailed answers to the questions asked.

Furthermore, it also provides the researcher with a greater opportunity to clear up

the ambiguities in the participants' answers before analyzing the data. Considering the

flexibility of the case study design and unstructured interview method proposed to

conduct this study, issues like participants trying to give false answer to the question was

addressed by asking the question again or gave a follow up question. Additionally, words

can mean different things in another context or culture. In this case, I was able to

understand the cultural context of the answers the participants gave. The interviews were

conducted in English which is a general language of the Liberia people.

Moreover, since the study has some cultural and political issues which are

considerably important, Lederach's (1996) elective model and Smith's (1999) indigenous

paradigm model for conducting research with traditional people were employed to

provide more understanding of how to conduct research with indigenous and everyday

people. The models helped provide a broader understanding and awareness of how the interviews were conducted and the data was analyzed.

Lederach's (1996) model points out four key factors for conducting a study: (a) People are key resource and not recipients; (b) Indigenous knowledge is a channel to discovering appropriate action; (c) Building from available local resources fosters self-sufficiency and sustainability; and (d) Empowerment emerges from processes that promote participation in naming and discovering appropriate responses to identified needs and problems.

This model proposed a methodological framework emphasizing the importance of cultural factors. The main idea was to help the researcher foster a pedagogical study that empowers people to participate in creating appropriate models for handling research. The elective approach aims at discovery and creation of models that emerge from resources within the setting; most importantly, culture is regarded as the center for conducting research that is responsive to local peoples.

Consequently, the aim of employing this model was to provide a participatory process in which participants give honest responses to the questions. Additionally, participants were empowered to formulate process, rather than dictated to. The model encouraged participants to participate freely, to articulate their understandings about how to approach this study. Lederach's elective model validated why the case study method was relevant and appropriate for this study because the intention of this study was to create a participatory process that embraced the information and answers from the people themselves.

In addition, Smith (1999) shared a similar view with Lederach. The indigenous paradigm model which involves a deconstruction of western ways of conducting research simply by sharing indigenous stories about research. Smith challenged traditional westerners' ways of gathering, knowing, and researching. She called for "decolonization" of research methodologies and advocated for a "new agenda" of indigenous research.

Thus, decolonization which is the central theme of Smith's approach, is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values that inform research practices (Smith, 1999). The approach situated this research in a much larger historical, political, and cultural context, and examined critical nature within these dynamics. The intent was to understand indigenous peoples, so that I could better address the issues they face.

Finally, Lederach and Smith's models for conducting studies with traditional people influenced the ways the interviews were conducted with the participants due to their strong traditional and cultural beliefs. Since Smith and Lederach's works influenced considerably how this study was conducted, it was important to pay close attention to the authors' views because Liberian citizens are culturally oriented, and it was important to have cultural consideration, especially when asking people question who have extreme power like elders and government authorities in Liberia.

Nevertheless, this study was not intended to challenge western scholarship of how to conduct research; however, this study deemed it appropriate to employ Smith and Lederach's models by considering people at the center of knowing and gathering information.

Against this backdrop, I met with and got advice from traditional people, specifically the elders in Liberia to seek traditional ways of seeking and gathering information because the participants were drawn from a traditional population. Based on my previous research experiences in Liberia, I needed guidance from the elders in Liberia to avoid breaking cultural norms and violating traditional practices. Also, since the study was sensitive to the issue of gender, I spoke with some females who were also knowledgeable of how to appropriately interact with traditional women in Liberia, especially when asking personal question about backgrounds, experiences, and political participation.

The main data collection method for this study was interviews in addition to document review based on a set of questions. Also, the interview process relied on Smith's (1999) indigenous model; meaning, adequate considerations were given to stories sharing by every participant. Smith's research model suggested that the indigenous paradigm approaches cultural protocols, values, and beliefs as integral aspects of the research. This belief is compatible and like what Lederach talked about in his elective model. Therefore, adhering to the views of these theorists helped designed and implemented the interview questions in a more appropriate cultural and political context.

Consequently, in collecting the data, participants were given the opportunity to respond in whatever way they choose. The questions were divided into categories. The first category was designed to gather demographic information from the participants. The second set of questions gathered information about citizens' roles, grassroots political participation, and recognition in local governance as it relates to the decentralization

politics in Liberia. And, the third set of questions gathered data about the citizens'
perception of decentralization, and the last category looked at the obstacles and benefits
of decentralization policy.

Since the interview questions were open-ended, time was not a constraint.
Whenever the participants arrived for the interview session, the interview began, and
when the questions were completed, and a participant has responded satisfactorily, the
interview ended. However, before the interviews with each participant, the participants
signed a consent form. Signing the form was voluntarily.

During the actual interview, I quietly listened more, took notes, and recorded the
conversation after which I then transcribed and translated the recordings and notes. Most
of the interview data was paraphrased or edited for adequate clarity. I paraphrased and
translated the information firsthand and did not need interpreter because I understood and
spoke the language spoken by the participants. Additionally, I did not intend to use direct
quotations verbatim because the native idioms would be vulnerable to misinterpretations.
I chose this path because it helped me to identify highlights and major themes emerging
from the information over the course of the interviews.

Instrumentation

In developing the questionnaires for the interview, I relied on experiences and
knowledge gained from conducting previous study in Liberia and adhering to suggestions
made by others concerning the cultural, political, and economic context of Liberia.
Additionally, the CLEAR tool served as a guide to design and administration the
questionnaires in this study.

The CLEAR tool (CDLR, 2008), which was first developed by the European

Committee on Local and Regional Democracy is presented in this study as an instrument

to be utilized by both local and national governments to evaluate and analyze citizen

participation in government and decision-making processes. This tool provided adequate

method to assess and evaluate the proper management of citizens' participation and

representation.

Moreover, the instrument assessed some factors that affect citizen participation

and underpinned democracy to effect policy and sustain effective democracy. It is stated

that the sustainability of effective democracy lies in the hands of successful citizen

participation in governmental affairs at all levels. According to the CLEAR tool, citizen

participation is considered successful when the following are enforced and accomplished:

- Can: When citizens can have the necessary resources, skills, understanding,
  and knowledge to participate.

- Like: Citizens like to have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation.

- Enabled: When citizens are given the opportunity to participate.

- Asked: When citizens are involved by official bodies and/or groups.

- Responded to: That citizen sees evidence that views and voices have been
  considered.

These five factors presented above raise the question of why citizen participation

is an important element in effective democracy and government affairs and that the

CLEAR tool will help inform the questions for this study. The document also offered first

that citizen participation is crucial to sustaining the legitimacy and longevity of decisions

and deliver accountability at national and local levels. Secondly, that citizens will effectively respond and act as effective leaders if they are given the basic support as community leaders. Third, there is a need to strengthen public confidence and the effective way to achieve this is to seek active citizen participation and support.

It is also argued that government needs to always identify ways to engage with citizen for the fact that government needs to listen and learn from citizens to design better policies and deliver services adequately and effectively (CDLR, 2008). By adhering to this principle, government becomes aware that services and goods provided are meeting the needs of citizens and communities (CLEAR, 2008). Therefore, citizen participation enables more effective learning and better decision processes for democratic effectiveness and success. Moreover, citizen participation has an intrinsic value (CDLR, 2008). It explains that being a citizen of a community means having a voice in decision making by which one is affected. Good governance itself is not just a matter of delivering good outcomes but to manage democracy effectively which facilitates adequate citizens' participation.

This tool helped guide and validated the questionnaires for this study to collect the data from the selected participants. For example, the participants were asked to share their perception of decentralization, participation, and good governance in Liberia rather than asking what their role in the political government in Liberia was. This means that the interview questions were opened-ended to understand the participants' political role in local governance.

Data Analysis Plan

Creswell (2009) and Yin (1984) offered that qualitative data analysis is the

actual process of transforming, inspecting, and cleaning of the data with the aim of

identifying useful themes, information, and conclusions. Stake (2010) supported of this

concept when it was stated that qualitative data analysis is the procedure of moving

the qualitative data collected into interpretation and explanation of the study under

examination.

In addition to the above views, Huberman and Miles (1994) asserted that to

recognize consistent patterns and themes from the data collected, qualitative data

analysis must involve coding all the collected data. The authors also alluded to the

process of data collection, data analysis, and reporting findings must be sequential and

consistent. Also, this was what Creswell (2009) called data analysis spiral, a method

used to integrate data collection and data analysis. Also, adhering to the concepts above

and in addition to Patton's (2002) view, significant understanding of the data collected

and cleaned up of the dataset was done before analyzing the data to form the narratives.

Nevertheless, this study also adhered to Yin's (1984) claimed that a researcher

must collect and store multiple sources of data comprehensively and systematically. The

data must be in formats to be referenced and sorted so that converging lines of inquiry

and patterns can be uncovered. This approach was applied after the interview process

and as a method to code the interview and identify emerging themes for interpretation

and analysis.

Subsequently, after cleaning up the data, it was transcribed and an electronic

version of each set of interview notes was created. The NVivo software was used to code

the data with the notion that this software is one of the best and most utilized software

used in coding data in qualitative study. The data was coded separately based on main

themes gathered from the interviews (Stake, 2010). After coding the data, the information

was placed and grouped according to themes and content.

Additionally, based on the coded information, narratives of the findings were

written. Each participants' document was coded and reviewed separately (Stake, 2010).

The interview documents were printed, and sessions were cut and pasted on a separate

sheet of paper. These notes were labelled and pasted according to main themes as

grounded in the literature and based on the participants' responses. The main themes

gathered and coded from the data collected formed the findings in the results chapter.

Recognizing that there are many other data analysis strategies in qualitative

study, content analysis strategy was utilized (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis

strategy helped to reduce qualitative data by taking volumes of qualitative data and

identifying cores and meanings (Patton, 2002; Mayring, 2000). I used content analysis

strategy as a search engine for any emerging keywords and themes, concepts from the

dataset.

Moreover, relied on this software to identify patterns, themes, keywords, key

phrases, and concepts. Also, the software helped to identify relationships among the

keyword, themes, and concepts in the dataset for interpretation, analysis, and writing the

findings. Based on these steps of data management, trustworthiness of the study was

ensured.

Research Trustworthiness

The aim of validity in research design was to maximize the degree to which the findings obtained accurately describe and are generalizable to the greater population (Creswell, 2007). Also, Yin (1984) suggests and describes two levels of validity: internal and external. This study takes both into consideration in designing this research. To further discuss the context of trustworthiness, consideration of dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability was imperative. This means adherence to what Lincoln and Guba (1989) indicated that every study must consider these factors when conducting a structure study.

Credibility

Therefore, credibility in this study made sure that the information of all participants represents what was attributed to them. This idea is supported by Lincoln et al. (1989) when they argued that the criterion can be addressed by member checking. The authors claimed and agreed with Stake (2010) that member checking is a technique for ensuring the credibility of qualitative research. Furthermore, by adhering to the process, I was able to present the transcripts from the interview to the participants as indicated by Stake. The author also argued that before the interview, the researcher must allow the participants to review the transcripts to provide a broader understanding of the subject which was considered in this study.

Based on this notion, notes pads and recorder were used to monitor the study and to keep record of the progress made while conducting the study. Considering Guba and Lincoln (1989) description of progressive subjectivity strategy, I ensured that the

information given from the participants were integrated and represented in the findings

accurately and formed part of the conclusion of the study.

Transferability

In connection to the credibility criterion, the transferability was considered by

critically and carefully considering the cultural context of Liberia, event, time, and place

to develop the framework of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Thus, addressing

transferability further, Yin (1993) suggested that it must reflect if findings are

generalizable beyond the immediate case; the more variations in places, people, and

procedures, a case study can withstand and still yield the same findings.

Based on this view, generalizing that citizens' participation and the

decentralization policy in Liberia was unrealistic. This study may not be generalizable

because it aims at gathering and understanding of people perceptions specifically within

the context of Liberia. The study may not be applicable to people's situations in the US,

London, Asia, or any other countries because it is constructed to the Liberia's political

and social contexts. But some aspects of governance, decentralization policy, and

citizens' participation are indeed common among these principalities.

Confirmability

It was encumbrance on the study to ensure that the findings and conclusions of

the research truly reflect the participants' experiences and stories and not my idea as

indicated by Shenton (2004). In addition, Stake (2010) confirmed that a researcher bias

can undermine confirmability and recognizably, not all bias can be eliminated in the

study (Patton, 2002). Therefore, from the outset of the study, it became clear that my

bias could affect and impact this study. However, adhering to Miles and Huberman (1994), I acknowledged these biases, and some steps were taken which helped to reduced and eliminated personal bias. This helped determined the level of conformability for this study.

Therefore, by ensuring that biases in this study have minimum threats to the validity of this study, a strategy to demonstrate confirmability was employed. Another strategy was to use triangulation which also demonstrate confirmability for this study. Objectively, this study is also about change which means that citizens' experiences was the heart of change with the aim of restoring stability in broken society and improving the living conditions of all people. But if there is any external validity in this study, it was possible bias in the process of generalizing the conclusion.

Additionally, one possible threat to the validity that was also considered was the exclusion of youth and foreigners as political participants in this study. It was decided not to consider information from these groups because I believed that their participation might undermine or change the information valuable to the study which could also underpin dependability.

Dependability

As Guba and Lincoln (1989) asserted, dependability is based on the notion of procedure and repeatability. Recognizably, there are extreme challenges to demonstrate adequate dependability in a qualitative study due to the phenomenon that is being studied. The case of Liberia presented a peculiar context. The subject, people, and culture under this study made it challenging to replicate experiences and practices of the

people (Shelton, 2009). The challenging context is also documented and described as the 14 years of civil war that undermined democracy, and 171 years of centralized system of government that produced less growth and development.

Nevertheless, Shelton (2009) argued that using qualitative method calls for transparency in documenting the process, method, and data adequately so that the study can become replicable by future researchers. Hence, this study may be replicable by other researchers who want to examine just citizens' participation and or decentralization in general and in another context and location other than Liberia.

Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (1989) asserted that a dependable study needs to be accurate and consistent to ensure replication. Based on this notion, this study adhered to this concept by evaluating dependability of data that included replication and inquiry accountability (Shelton, 2009). Subsequently, other researchers were asked to carry out separate inquiries to ensure that the data matched the findings. I also asked specialized reviewers to conduct adequate scrutiny of all relevant supporting documents. Moreover, dependability helped improved by triangulation; by this I mean, all weaknesses in the data collection process were corrected by using alternate data-gathering methods; for example, document review as indicated by Lincoln at. el.

Ethical Procedure

Confidentiality, which is the protection of participants' privacy, rights, and safeguards, was a critical part of the study. It also encourages open discussion and a full investigation and examination of issues. However, any information that was obtained from participants or linked to participants were kept confidential. The participants were

asked to be audio taped for this research only. Information and data collected were used only for this study. All communication made in or in connection with the interview process were confidential and was not released for any purpose not described above.

Additionally, personal and demographic information such as name, tribe, and geography location can pose potential threats to the participants' political future, well-being, and status. Therefore, participants' information was not released to anyone, and will be destroyed after five years from the date the dissertation was finalized and accepted by Walden University. The participants were also informed of this procedure and were told that this follows Walden University IRB standards.

Summary

I employed qualitative method to conduct this study based on the nature and research question of the study. The qualitative method was justified as indicated above to best fit this study due the phenomenon the study seeks to address that has to do with real life human condition. The purpose of this study was to create awareness for political reform, and to create the capacity for effective good governance and citizens' participation in Liberia.

The study also bridged the gap that exists between local citizens and the national government because of the effective implementation of a decentralization policy based on the perceptions of the citizens themselves. To adequately address the research question, this study relied on data that was collected from participants and the documents from Liberia in addition to relevant literature which were reported in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth knowledge of how decentralization policy serves as a catalyst for increasing citizens' participation in government? and for good governance in Liberia. The findings presented are based on data gathered from interviews of 20 participants that were selected for the study. The primary research question was addressed after the interpretation and analysis of the data.

Decentralization policy has been perceived in the 21st century as a popular prescription for enabling citizens' participation and increasing good governance around the world (Treisman, 2002). However, based on the examination of empirical studies on decentralization efforts, there was limited knowledge about citizens' participation in decision making and good governance in Liberia. Thus, the purpose of this study was to provide knowledge on how decentralization policy could enhance citizen's participation and good governance in Liberia.

The primary research question in this study was: How can decentralization policy potentially enhance citizen participation and good governance in Liberia? In addressing this research question, the following five subquestions were posed:

- What are the most appropriate ways for the Liberian citizens to get directly involved in the governance of their country?
- Are there any obstacles to citizen participation in Liberia?
- How can citizens overcome these barriers if there are any?
- Is the implementation of decentralization possible in Liberia?

- What are the anticipated benefits of political decentralization?

Consequently, this chapter covered the following topics: an introduction to the chapter, the purpose of the study, the main research question, and the research setting, the demography of participants, the data collection and analysis plan, and the issues of trustworthiness. The chapter also presented the results of the study based on the document review and interviews conducted.

The Setting of the Study

Liberia was chosen as the place to conduct the study. As indicated in the methodological section, Liberia is situated on the west coast of Africa and bordered by Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ivory Coast. The country gained its political independence in 1847 and is divided into 16 main geographical counties (Dolo, 2012; Sawyer, 2008). The seat of the government (Monrovia) is in one county that has hosted the government for over 171 years (Kieh, 2008). The population of the country has risen over the years to 4.7 million in 2017 from 3.5 million in 1990. The country operates under three branches of a democratic political system.

As Leon and Davis (2009) stated, the research setting of a study has important consequences on the type of data that can be collected, the interpretation and analysis of the study, and the results and findings of the study. Thus, the research setting was adequately examined to be able to gather the data to complete the study.

Liberia like many developed countries (Nigeria, Uganda, Mexico, Malawi, and Ghana) has over the years deployed decentralization policies as a reform to governance (Bissessar, 2002; Joshi & Ayee, 2009). Considering the number of policies and

legislative enactments for reform in Liberia, which have intended to guide the implementation of government services to its citizens, decentralization has become the main needed policy to gain attraction in the democratic and political in Liberia. Thus, the Government of Liberia's Information Commission has highlighted specific enactments and public policies that have improved Liberia's governance system including: The Governance Commission, the National Ports Authority of Liberia, the Environmental Protection Authority, the National Concession Commission, the National Information Commission, the National Law Reform Commission, among others.

Importantly, the study took consideration of the demography and political divisions (rural and urban) of Liberia to collect the data. Therefore, in the rural setting, the interviews were conducted with traditional leaders with knowledge and experiences of the political and social structure of Liberia based on traditional and cultural experiences. However, no interpretation was needed because I could speak understand the language they spoke.

Demonstrating flexibility during the interview process was critical in collecting the data since the study involved some cultural and political issues. Therefore, Lederach's (1996) elective model and Smith's (1999) indigenous paradigm model for conducting research with traditional people was employed to provide more flexibility and guidance on how the data was collected. Also, adhering to the elective and paradigm concepts broadened my understanding and increased my awareness to analysis data.

On the other hand, interviews that were conducted in urban setting did not require adherence to these cultural norms because the participants were educated and had

political knowledge which distinguish for leaders in the rural area. Therefore, I met with the participants who lived and worked in the urban area in their offices and any area that was convenient for them but also refrained from going to a public place, for example, restaurants and entertainment areas, to avoid interference and distraction.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data involved transcribing and some initial coding as well as the use of the NVivo software (see Figure 3). Transcriptions of the interviews were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1976, 1993; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data analysis was iterative with data collection. Data were analyzed as they were collected through the process of coding.

The transcription of the interviews produced some initial thoughts on issues raised by respondents. During the final transcribing, I noticed some recurring words and phrases from participants. Based on the process described by Sardana (2013) called descriptive coding, the details of the responses provided by participants were perused and descriptive annotations related to the topic, issue, or attribute were recorded against sections of the text. According to Saldana (2013), description is the foundation of qualitative inquiry, and the primary goal is to describe what is seen and heard in data gathering. In addition to the description, any salient details from the interviews or thoughts that occurred during the initial coding were also recorded in memos for follow-up action and later use in the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered (see Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive Coding Matrix (Excerpts from Qualitative Interviews)

Text from Interview	Preliminary Thematic Description
…decentralization is a perfect stepping stone for good governance with it everyone feels the sense of belonging and willing to contribute their own quota since in fact people feel responsible to hold themselves responsible for anything that goes wrong instead of blaming others.	Acceptance
…the constraint was a lack of understanding and appreciation of how decentralization is all about.	Context
…the challenge was the relationship with the line Ministry and the capacity to influence implementation of the decentralization policy	Relationship
….. citizens participation is key to the process as observed by most of the participants	Coordination
….. benefit expected because of the process is going to be huge	Benefit
Some group of people feel more superior and therefore oppose to the process of decentralization and will always prefer centralization	Resistance

Following the initial coding process, I used the NVivo software package to further classify and analyze the data. The transcripts were uploaded to the software and the initial descriptive codes generated as nodes. Using NVivo, the sources were coded, and attributes added to facilitate classification. I also generated a word cloud with a view to ascertaining whether there were any other recurrent words that may have been overlooked (Table #2 below).

Figure 1.

NVivo Nodes from Coding.

The responses to each question were then analyzed in a second cycle, and I paid

closer attention to the key points and issues raised in the response. By the end of the cycle

a few more codes had emerged, and the requisite nodes created. In this process, I was

able to examine relationships, make an assessment as to whether there was adequate

evidence supporting their inclusion in the coding process, and identify the nature of the

relationship (i.e., associative, influential, or symmetrical). By the end of the cycle, I

created nodes, and with the help of the software various reports and diagrams that I'd

generated, I conducted further analysis and interpretation of the data.

Research Trustworthiness

As asserted by Yin (1984) and Creswell (2007) that trustworthiness is to prove

that the validity of research is maximized the level of accuracy of the findings, and the

generalization of results. Additionally, Yin suggested the internal and external validities as the two important levels of validity for conducting research. Adhering to Yin, both validities were considered as an important component in designing this research.

To further discuss the evidence of trustworthiness, consideration of dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability were discussed in-depth in chapter three of this study within the scope and context to what Lincoln and Guba (1989) indicated that every research must consider these factors when conducting a structured subject.

Credibility

Therefore, measures were designed and implemented to ensure that findings were credible, and the presentation of interview transcripts was consistent with what each participant stated during the interview. This process was designed by compatible and adequate checking of the interview transcript. This idea was suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1989) that checking the data source will ensure some level of trustworthiness in the research study. Furthermore, by monitoring the process throughout and recording thoughts as they occurred was done as an additional way to ensure accuracy (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In furtherance, credibility involves the way a researcher presents the truth of the research study's findings.

Transferability

Thus, to establish that the research findings were accurate, a triangulation process was used. Additionally, to demonstrate how the findings were applicable and generalizable, a thick description was used which showed that the findings applied to other contexts and situations (transferability). As stated in chapter three of this study, the

transferability process involved a cross-section of government, community, and academic institutions to prove the findings. This approach was supported by Guba and Lincoln.

Dependability

To ensure that dependability of the study which means that the study can be replicated by other researchers and that the findings are consistent, inquiry audits were employed as advised by Creswell (2007). Accordingly, a research colleague conducted a review and examination of the research study and the findings. Also, the use of document review and interview instrument ensured evidence of trustworthiness of the study.

Confirmability

Finally, critical and adequate attention was provided to participants' perspectives on the peculiarities, economic, education, and cultural differences of the institutions (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To determine the degree of neutrality in the research findings and to indicate that the findings were based on the participants' responses and that personal bias and value judgment were avoided, consistent audits were administered which subsequently highlighted every step of analyzing the data. This process ensured that the findings presented in this study matched the participants' responses. Also, critical and adequate attention was provided to participants' perspectives on the peculiarities, economic, education, and cultural differences of the institutions (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To determine the degree of neutrality in the research findings and to indicate that the findings were based on the participants' responses and that personal bias and value judgment were avoided, consistent audits were administered which subsequently

highlighted every step of analyzing the data. This process ensured that the findings presented in this study matched the participants' responses.

Results

Document Review

Many empirical documents relative to the creation of decentralization policy in Liberia were selected as the first step of gathering data for the study. The Government of Liberia public document identified on websites relative to decentralization policy, participation and representation, good governance, government ministries, and traditional councils were all reviewed to inform this first step of the data collection and analysis process. These documents included the following five:

- The Governance Commission Annual Governance Report

- The Governance Reform Commission

- The Act to Amend the New Executive Law of 1972 to establish the Ministry of Local Government

- The Human Rights Commission

- Decentralizing the State in Liberia: The Issues, Progress and Challenges

Information gathered from these documents provided adequate and credible knowledge on the formation and design of decentralization policy, its implementation, institutions, operational roadmap, the structure, staffing, funding, and annual reports. Subsequently, the Act to establish the Ministry of Local Government highlighted the mandate and structure of the relevant to the decentralization policy of Liberia.

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Thus, the Ministry was mandated to provide oversight of local governments, specifically in their management of balanced, socio-economic development programs, empowerment of local communities, strengthening the delivery of social services, and the promotion and delivery of good governance, including popular participation, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, and access to justice at local levels. Hence the Ministry core function was to lead in the implementation of Government policy and program on decentralization and local government, to develop regulations that ensure the effective implementation of the decentralization and local government program and local government law.

Similarly, the GC's document on education and health services provided the partial decentralization policy rollout. Accordingly, the document indicated that the success of decentralization policies depended on the ability of 'legitimate institutions. The report recorded that the Governance Reform Commission, and its successor were formed to formulate policy recommendations and implementation strategies to ensure that accountable, transparent, participatory and responsive to the delivery of public goods and services.

The main findings centered around building a basic, secondary, and tertiary education system that is decentralized, and the National Health System endorsement of the universal declaration that access to quality healthcare is a universal human right and is structured in three tiers: primary, secondary and tertiary.

Finally, under the document review section, a research article published in one of Liberia's local print media in 2014 titled, "Decentralizing the State in Liberia," revealed

that "decentralization reforms were most necessary for Liberia due to the long-lasting

brutal civil war which lasted almost 14 years." (p. xxx). Thus, making decentralization a

key catalyzer to heal Liberia's political and economic epidemics.

Nyei (2014) pointed out that there was an agreement actors, politicians,

government, and Civil Society Organizations-CSO on the need to transition from a

centralized system of governance to decentralized governance. Consequently, to

minimize central of power, including the promulgation of relevant policies and the

deconcentrating of services to the counties steps were put in place.

However, despite the little achievements and impact of the decentralization

policy, the document reviewed identified that there were obstruction issues to be

addressed. There remain issues identified were structural to legal and procedural,

constitutional reform to support the policy, revenue collection and expenditure, abuse of

power, corruption, and commitment to roll out a decentralization policy program that will

take into consideration the above-identified obstacles and constraints (Nyei, 2014).

However, the author also identified some progress and potential of decentralization

policy in Liberia's governance reform efforts as a strong prescription and intervention for

good governance and for better service delivery in Liberia.

<p align="center">**The Interviews**</p>

Demography

The twenty participants selected came from various background with diverse

educational qualifications and experience. A total of eight females and twelve males

participated in the study. The categories of participants were government institutions,

civil society organizations, and the educational community.

Figure 2

Distribution of Participants

Institutions	Freq	%
Government	7	35
University	10	50
CSO	3	15
Total	20	100

As indicated in the table 35% of participants came from two different government

institutions (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Governance Commissions) that were

directly involved with the decentralization process. Another 50% of the participants came

from the educational circle most of whom with over 10 years of experience teaching

political and behavioral sciences at the University level. The rest 15% came from Civil

Society Organizations that were involved in advocacy activities in rural communities in

Liberia.

The question of decentralization policy began by asking participants about their

general perception of the implementation of decentralization policy in Liberia. The

question evoked clear responses with an overwhelming number of 76% of them agreeing

that the policy would enhance citizens' participation and increase good governance, and

20% of them did not agree that the policy would have an impact on citizens while only

4% was not sure. For example, those who agreed that the policy would have some impact

statements are below:

P1: Decentralization is new because of the country's over 171 years of the

centralized governance system.

P2: Decentralization came about because of the over-centralization of governance

in Liberia.

P3: The leading cause of the civil war in Liberia was the lack of decentralization

of governance.

P5: Participants' highlighted three key areas of decentralization during the

research which include political, administration, and fiscal

decentralization.

P6: Explained that if areas of authorities are decentralized it will enhance the

issues of transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of government.

Based on the variances in the responses, it can be clearly seen that majority of the

citizens are in support of the process but still need further awareness and clarifications

especially at the local level were most people outside of government do not understand

the background of the decentralization policy.

The second question sought to understand some ways citizens perceived the

decentralization process can enhance good governance and citizen's participation. All

twenty participants (100%) responded to this question with 40% perceiving that

decentralization is the best option for development in Liberia and agreed that the policy

should be implemented. Another 25% agreed that decentralization is good for Liberia,

and 20% agreed that decentralization is a need but more clarification and awareness of

the people.

Figure 3

Perceptions of Decentralization Policy

General Perception of decentralization	Number of participants	Percent
Good will bring about development	8	40
It is good for Liberia Need more awareness	5	25
before implementation It should gradually	4	20
Awareness programs	3	15

Additionally, all twenty participants (100%) agreed that decentralization is a

perfect stepping stone and a better platform for good governance. Also, 15 of the

participants (75%) agreed that decentralization will lead to greater citizens' participation

in decision making which will enhance good governance and development both at the

national and local levels, only three participants, 5% disagreed that the policy will have

any impact on citizens participation while two participants, 10% were not sure as

indicated in table 4 below.

Table 2

Perception of Participation

Citizens participation in decentralization	No. of participants	%
Agree	13	75
Disagree	5	25
Not sure	2	10
Total	20	100

Participants were also asked to name some benefits of decentralization policy in Liberia as they perceived? Thus, more than half of the interviewees (85%) agreed that decentralization will be of greater benefits to the people in the country. The participants perceived that decentralization will enhance such as, better decision making, build local capacity, and local government ownership. Only 15% (3) of the interviewees believe order wise.

However, participants were asked to identify any barriers to decentralization policy. Based on the participants' responses, barriers to the implementation of the decentralization policy in Liberia ranged from low capacity at the local level (25%), corruption and greed (20%) as well as lack of information and accountability (20%). All twenty respondents agreed that there are barriers to the implementation of the decentralization policy in Liberia as indicated below.

Table 3

Perception of Decentralization Barriers

Barriers to decentralization	No. of participants	%
Greed	4	20
Corruption	4	20
Low capacity level	5	25
Lack of information	3	15
Lack of accountability	4	20
Total	20	100

Based on the above table, the effect of these barriers to citizens is enormous. All the interviewees' agreed that these barriers will post a major challenge to the process and it may lead to a lack of confidence on the part of most of the locals. Lack of confidence to fully participate will affect citizens attitude toward performing their task and functions as a member of any group in the process of policy implementation.

P8. 45% of the respondents believed that effective capacity building and training, as well as hand-on desk activities for local authorities at all level of the governance, will help to curtail these obstacles or barriers while 55% of interviewees believe the passing of the New Local Government Act into law will gradually help to overcome these obstacles.

On the question of how participant perceive these barriers can be overcome, all twenty interviewees (100%) agreed that failure to overcome these barriers may lead to the unsuccessful implementation of the policy. They expressed a high degree of hopelessness and indicated the potential dangers that ranged from lack of good

governance and developments, poor health care and education system, and lack of participation in decision making.

On the other hand, all the participants (100%) agreed that effective decentralization policy that has multiples benefits; for example, may result to the active participation of citizens in the governance and development process of their locality. However, they stressed that for its implementation to be successful it must be conceived in a way that is appropriate to the context of the environment and careful attention to its various interrelated elements.

Perception of Major Achievement of Decentralization Policy in Liberia

Responses to the question of the achievement of the decentralization policy in Liberia was unquestionable with a singular most achievement of the decentralization policy in Liberia indicated by the participants was the construction and operationalizing of 15 County Service Centers in all 15 counties in Liberia. It is through these centers that citizens can now have access to basic services such as birth and marriage certificates, drivers and business licenses, permits and a host of others. Previously, these were provided through Ministries and Agencies in the capital Monrovia and citizens would have had to incur extensive travel and other costs to access them. Additionally, by making these services more accessible, the Government of Liberia has been able to generate significant revenues.

Perceptions of Participation and Good Governance

The participants also provided some responses and discussion relative to their perceptions of good governance and citizens' participation in addition to the main question in this study. Below are few responses of the perception of good governance.

P1*:* Decentralization policy is a perfect stepping stone and good platform for good governance that will encourage accountability and responsiveness.

P2: Decentralization will allow citizens to choose what kind of developments they want in their communities instead of central government imposing development on them.

P3: Citizens' role in the decentralization process is very crucial. Decision making and other activities that are to be undertaken for the implementation, citizens views need to be included.

P4: However, some barriers to decentralization included but not limited to the followings; low human capacity, funding for implementation of activities, lack of strong political wills etc.

P5: These barriers may affect citizens' participation in many ways. First decision taking without the inputs of communities' leaders will be difficult to implement if the locals are not involved and if there is no training program for the locals it becomes difficult for them to be on par and coordination will be a serious hindrance.

P6: Participants believed that if the New Local Government Act is pass into law this help to overcome some of these barriers and obstacles.

P7: Lack of rapid economic development as can be seen now will be the single most obvious dangers as stated by the participants.

P8: The dividend will be great. When people feel part of something, they love it, protect it and defend it. We all will look at Liberia as our own and will be happy to shoulder our responsibilities.

P9: The overall perception concerning participation and good governance were viewed as critical parts in the full fulfillment of a decentralization policy.

The participants' perception for decentralization to be successful, requires careful attention to its various interrelated elements. Some of the participants believe that the process of decentralization must be gradual to allow opportunity for awareness and understanding since this requires breaking away from an old centralized system.

There was no cultural barrier of decentralization because the process itself gives the local greater responsible to manage their own natural resources. Majority of the participants believes that the dividend of the policy is great. During of the interview, 15 of participants overly stated, "When you feel a part of any system you tend to love it, cherish it, and protect and defend it." We all will look at Liberia as our own and feel happy to perform our duties with diligent, efficiency and effectiveness the participants offered.

Participants emphasized on the three components of decentralization which according to them is very cardinal to the overall success of the policy. Participants observed that when administration is decentralized, and administrative functions are given to counties and districts it will enable local authorities to address the issues of

development in the context of their community. Along with administrative

decentralization participants also highlighted the need for political decentralization which

allow counties to have their own legislative assembly and eventually led to the election of

counties superintendent and other officials if need be.

Perception of Decentralization Implementation Strategy

Participants were also asked of their opinions on the contribution of the

implementing agencies and if it has been fulfilling its mandate. Based on the questions,

participants perceived that it was very difficult to distinguish the role of the Governance

commission and the Ministry of Internal Affairs when it comes to the implementation of

the decentralization policy.

However, the participants expressed satisfaction on the way the agencies were

carrying out their functions. The participants believed that the creation of these service

deliver centers in the County has helped the local to access basic services within their

own locals thereby avoiding and saving much needed resources that would otherwise be

used for transportation and other alike.

Graph 1

The county service center.
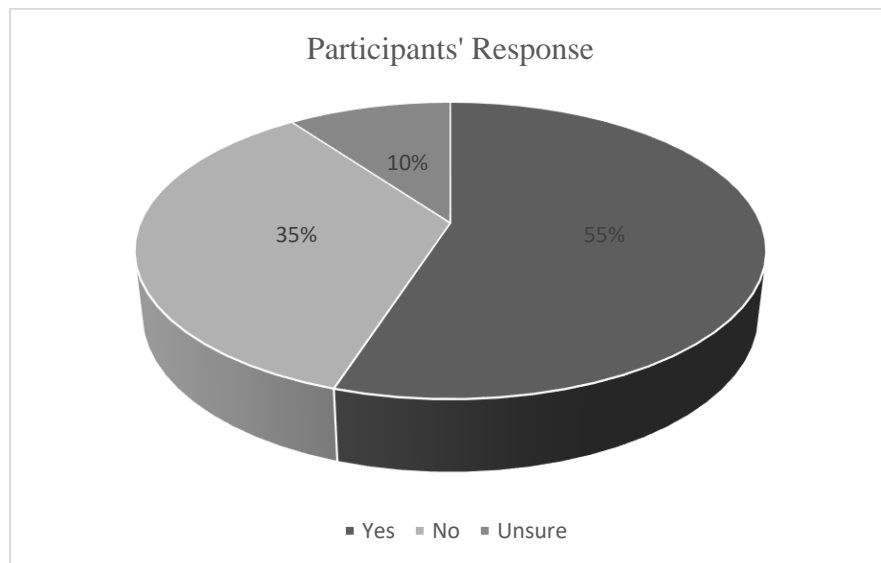
As indicated in the graph above 55% of the participants said yes that the centers were effective while 35% said no that the centers were not effective, and the rest 10% was not sure. Despite majority of the participation indicated that these centers were effective; however, the numbers presented also showed the need to improve service delivery and the centers.

Decentralization Main Challenges in Liberia

Governance reform is a complex political initiative, particularly in situations where the state is haunted by politics of patronage, marginalization and a weak capacity. This is exactly the context within which governance reform is taking place in Liberia as efforts are made towards a system of democratization of governance that accelerates socio-economic, education, and political development (Nyei, 2014). Other challenges facing the Liberia reform process is identifying the way policy reform will commence to

the problem of low human resource and finance capability to commence the

decentralization process. Additionally, overcoming a failed centralized system of

governance, lack of accountability, corruption resulting to high rates of poverty and

illiteracy. The participants also perceived the lack of constitutional reform and limited

power for decision making at local level are all challenges to the full implementation of

decentralization policy in Liberia as indicated in the table below:

Figure 4

The Effects of Decentralization

Issues	Effects	Perception
Decentralization process is very slow	Services are not effectively provided under the decentralization policy	Make decentralization process effective by localizing authority
Limited authority and ownership of government	No government services or inadequate government programs	Decentralization policy to establish an inclusive and participatory government system
Many sectors in the local government are under staff	Reduce revenue generation by local government	Make decentralization process effective to increase participation
Poor implementation of government policies by relevant institutions	Lack of trust between government & locals and hinders government performance at the local level	Inclusion of all sectors in decision making (youth, women, disable, religious and CSOs and elders)
Limited supply of logistics from national level to local level	It imposes external security threats	Make decentralization process to ensure human security
Numerous government services borders in the county are inaccessible	Influx of illegal aliens and human drugs traffickers	Decentralized and enforce the security sector
Political Isolation	Lack of trust in government	Decentralization policy to strengthen coordination and collaboration between local and national governments

Summary

The main research question of the study ascertained the perception of citizens on the decentralization policy and its potential to enhance participation and improve good governance. The study also sought to find out what role does citizens perceived to play during the rolling out of the decentralization process and the benefits. To answer these questions, several aspects of decentralization were examined.

Firstly, on the issue of decentralization policy, the research found out that most those interviewed agreed that decentralization is the prescription for Liberia's development. The participants believed that if decentralization is done, there will be adequate involvement of citizens in aspect of governance. According to the participants, decentralization will give citizens the chance to choose the type of development they want in their communities.

Apart from participation, the participants agreed that decentralization will be led to rapid economic development of the rural communities and they will benefit from quality services provided by government. The study also revealed that if decentralization is implemented the issue of transparency and accountability will be the norm of society.

However, the participants also talked about the implementation challenged. The lack of adequate awareness, corruption, lack of accountability, and low capacity at local government level were some of the challenges outlined by the participants during the interviewed. They also called for greater female participation in the process.

During the interviewed three keys components of decentralization came out which were fiscal, political, and administrative decentralization. According to the participants,

fiscal decentralization will ultimately give local government the power to generate their own resources and have access to control and manage their resources. Also, political decentralization will allow local people to have their own local assembly and voting of key positions in the communities. However, the participants acknowledged that these issues will not be done in a haste and proposed the need for regular capacity building program for the local government.

The study further revealed that most of the participants were not aware of the different role being play by the implementing agencies such as the Governance Commission and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the decentralization policy. Most of the participants were confused as to which entity was leading the process. Apart from the creation of agencies by law or statute to support policy implementation, there were some enabling factors that facilitated the creation of agencies such as the political will demonstrated by governments and politicians; the availability of experts and professionals to fill the leadership roles in agencies; and the technical and financial support provided by development agencies and financial institutions for policy and program implementation.

Despite of these enabling factors, many barriers to success were highlighted. The respondents indicated that the enthusiasm and passion for instituting social change demonstrated by those involved in the conceptualization and planning of the agency and the initial roll out of the policy implementation process, often declined as these officials are transferred out of their positions of influence, or as political regimes are changed. Some examples of poor performance and failure were provided such as the case in which

the decision to establish the agency was abandoned, and sustainability of a unit was hampered because there was inadequate planning for the transition phase.

The result also revealed some operational challenges which in many cases served to impasse the success of the decentralization policy. The challenges included inadequate human and financial resources; lack of coordination among entities and principals, which often resulted in duality and overlapping roles and responsibilities, limited autonomy and decision-making powers, and high levels of micro-management. Despite of these challenges outlined, agencies have registered some measure of success, particularly with respect to operationalization of county service centers, awareness raising and publicity campaigns, the execution of training programs and the preparation of educational, promotional, and operational manuals.

The responses to the interview questions indicated that participants have high expectation and believe that decentralization will lead to rapid development and economic growth, while a few participants believed that decentralization made not necessary be the solution to our many problems.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter discussed and interpreted the findings from the investigation conducted in addressing the research question of how decentralization policy. The study utilized a qualitative method and case study approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of a decentralization policy in Liberia. The two sources of data collection

process were document review and interviews with 20 participants. The participants

responded to 10 questions based on their perceptions of decentralization policy, citizens'

participation, and good governance in Liberia.

The chapter covered the interpretation of the data, the limitations of the study

which is due to the scope of the study, the recommendation for further study to address

the gap in this study, and other recommendations and suggestions for policy reform and

to improve governance and service delivery to citizens. Additionally, the chapter ended

with the implication for social change, and the conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

The central research question in this study ascertained the perceptions of citizens

about the decentralization policy initiated by the government of Liberia. The research

question also sought to find out what role citizens believed they would play during the

rolling out of the decentralization policy process and what would be the long-time

benefits. To answer these questions, several aspects of the issue were examined.

Subsequently, on the issue of decentralization, most participants believed that

decentralization was the solution for Liberia to achieve prosperity and development.

Based on the literature, decentralization was explained as the total involvement of

citizens in all aspects of governance, which would give citizens the right to choose the

type of development they wanted in their communities. This meant that citizens'

participation must be important in decision making. According to Benet's (2012) polarities

of democracy model, participation should not be confused with pseudo-participatory systems

that merely create the illusion that people are participating, while actual decision-making power remains in the hands of authorities.

Based on this view, I can assert that the lack of citizens' participation and poor service delivery system are human rights issues associated with five interrelated pairs of the polarities of democracy which are: Freedom-authority, justice-due process, diversity-education, human rights-communal obligations, and participation-representation offered by (Benet, 2013). Thus, participation must give people control over decision-making so that participation in government can impact human and community development.

Additionally, it was clear that decentralization can lead to the rapid economic development of rural communities given the quality of services provided by the government. The findings revealed that if decentralization were implemented adequately, the issue of transparency and fair play would be the norm of the day. However, as stated in the three case studies in the literature (Chapter 2) and the polarity model presented in this study, it is imperative to point out that the Liberia's decentralization policy likewise has some major challenges and limitations: The lack of adequate participation and representation, low capacity at local government, corruption, abuse of power, mismanagement of power and public resources, oppression, lack of transparency as well as the mismanagement of the polarities of democracy were among the major challenges.

The participants also perceived that these barriers have undermined the function of Liberia's decentralization policy which is in line with what was asserted by Benet that the mis-management of democracy can contribute to fiscal, political, and administrative challenges.

In furtherance, the participants overwhelmingly agreed that it is true that Liberia's democracy is improving steadily by the government's ability and effort to manage some level of democracy; however, there remains some major challenges that affect the people of Liberia. Decentralization policy is still perceived as a matter of theory whereas local authorities are faced with challenges in implementing the development agendas of their respective communities. Moreover, inclusion, accountability, and transparency are considered abstract in the context of development as local and national authorities are seen by local communities as not being effective in disseminating proper and timely information to its citizenry on the utilization of development funds allotted for their communities.

Additionally, local and urban populations in the country continue to experience poverty, bad roads, poor educational and health systems, and unemployment, thus breeding potential conflict. Disputes over land and administrative boundaries, competition over natural resources (forests and minerals), weak governance and administrative structures at higher and lower levels resulting to inefficient service delivery continues to surface.

Based on these perceptions, these major challenges mentioned above can be classified as the mis-management of the polarities of democracy, mainly the lack of participation and representation as described by Benet in the polarity model that participation has a wider scope and that participation is an essential element to the establishment and maintenance of a democratic polity.

Furthermore, participation is regarded not just as a set of national representatives but also as a participatory society in which people have meaningful decision-making power (Benet, 2013). Thus, as indicated in the model that if participation is essential for humans exercising control over their own lives and their world, and if one of the purposes of democracy is to allow people to gain control over their lives, then participation that enables control must be an essential element of democracy and as a human right issue. Therefore, in this study, participation in decision making must benefit everyone because better decisions are made that leads to increase productivity and elimination of barriers to political decentralization and demolish bridges of centralized structure.

The findings further revealed that awareness of Liberia's decentralization policy was limited as some of the participants were not aware of the different role being played by the implementing agencies such as the Governance Commission and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The participants were confused as to which entity is leading the process on decentralization implementation.

Additionally, there were some enabling factors that facilitated the creation of agencies such as the political will demonstrated by governments and politicians; the availability of experts and professionals to fill the leadership roles in agencies; and the technical and financial support provided by development agencies and financial institutions for policy and program implementation successes.

Furthermore, the enthusiasm and passion for instituting social change demonstrated by those involved in the conceptualization and planning of the agency and the initial roll out of the policy implementation process, often declined as these officials are transferred out of their positions of influence, or as political regimes are changed.

Some examples of poor performance and failure were provided such as the case in which the decision to establish the agency was abandoned, and sustainability of a unit was hampered because there was inadequate planning for the transition phase of the policy.

Some operational challenges were also identified as well, which in many cases served to impasse the success of the agencies. These included inadequate human and financial resources; lack of coordination among entities and principals, which often resulted in duality and overlapping roles and responsibilities, limited autonomy and decision-making powers, and high levels of micro-management.

Despite these challenges outlined, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Governance Commission have registered some measure of success, particularly with respect to operationalization of county service centers, awareness raising and publicity campaigns, the execution of training programs and the preparation of educational, promotional, and operational manuals. These institutions have contributed to the policy implementation process and willing to recommend the strategy for use in policy processes, and if implemented, decentralization will lead to rapid development and economic growth.

However, for the successful implementation of the decentralization policy in Liberia to enhance citizens' participation and increase good governance, it must heavily rely on the proper management of the polarities of democracy to produce fiscal and political decentralization that will give local government the power to generate their own resources and have access to control and manage their resources. While political decentralization will allow the locals to have their own local assembly and voting of key

positions in the communities. Understandably, this will not be done in a haste, but will require regular capacity building program for the local government to solve these challenges and maintain capacity to sustain fiscal and political decentralization.

<p style="text-align:center">Limitations of the Study</p>

Qualitative method was selected as an approach to investigate decentralization policy as a potential prescription to maximize good governance and citizen participation in Liberia. The scope of the study itself suggests a limitation to the study in addition to other limitations like the sample size, and the criterion to select the participants in this study. The decision to employ qualitative method to conduct the study was based on the exploratory nature of the study. Therefore, the qualitative method and case study approach best fitted this study based on the aim of this study which was to examine the potential of decentralization policy as an intervention. This method also facilitated and formed the way the data was collected, interpreted, analyzed, and concluded. Considering the decision to utilize these approaches created some non-voidable limitations to this study. For example, as Stake (2010) indicated that when case study approach is used as a strategy for inquiry narrows and limits the scope of the study.

Subsequently, based on Patton (2002) and Creswell (2007) suggestions, the snowball strategy was utilized for recruiting participants for the study. The decision was made to use this idea to manage and analyze the data from the interview conducted which created another limitation to the study. However, to address these limitations a system was put in place by checking each stage of the data collection process to ensure trustworthiness and credibility.

Also, the credentials of all the participants who agreed to be interviewed were checked consistently and verified before and during the interview to ensure that they were eligibility for participation based on the criteria that were set by me. It was incumbent upon me to ensure that all the participants that agreed to participation fixed their signatures on the consent form before the interview.

Also, I acknowledged my personal biases and value judgments being influenced by my own feelings and perceptions; however, adhering to Creswell and Patton, all potential biases and value judgments were addressed through triangulation and continue verification and rigorous checking were done during the entire process of the study.

Also, a relevant limitation to this study was identified as the use of Western's language and education, especially when conducting interviews with rural people which can be intimidating to some traditional people and create potential threats to the quality of the participants' responses to the interview questions. However, this study adopted Lederach's elicitive (1996) and Smith's decolonialization (1999) models to deal with this limitation. These models helped me to see myself as a learner who was interested in learning about issues that change the lives of regular people. By creating more humanity, respect, listening to, writing about, and editing the stories of these participants, I have learned more than I set out to during the data collection process. Therefore, I collected abundant of information and data to form the findings in this study.

Moreover, while some citizens believed that decentralization made not necessary be the solution to the many problems of governance in Liberia; however, it is worth to acknowledge the government for gradual implementation since decentralization is a new

phenomenon in Liberia. Thus, this study offers are some recommendations for improvement. The recommendations include, the need for an accountability framework; the need for more advocacy, consultation, and participatory involvement of citizens, and partners in the creation of agencies; the need for careful consideration of the nature and scope of the policy at the design stage, and assessment as to whether the agency would in fact be the best possible means of contributing to successful decentralization policy implementation. Additionally, the need for adequate human and financial resources; the need for monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to be included in the model, with the requisite indicators for measuring and reporting success; and, the need to put in place a transition strategy for agency operations to be migrated to the public service after a specified period.

Also, based on Smoke (2010) assertion that decentralization policy implementation has been in a more evolutionary way through constitutional amendments rather than an instrument to design and form a constitution. For example, two African countries like Kenya in 2010 and Ghana in 1992 where these countries' constitutions were amended to accommodate decentralization policy reform supported the above assertion by Stoke. Based on the finding of this study, it can be concluded that the limited progress on the implementation of Liberia's decentralization policy should not be surprising based on the lack of proper constitution backing and most notably the prolonged existence of the centralized governance structure that has been supported by the current constitution for over 171.

Therefore, breaking away from the political regime of 171 years of centralized system of governance is challenging for Liberia's political leaders who have the economic and political authorities to constitute reforms despite of the centralized system of governance that has breaded grounds for bad services delivery system, human rights violation, corruption, citizens' isolation, growth and poor community development. The elements of a centralized system of government can be viewed as missed management of the polarities of democracy (Benet, 2012, 2013). Additionally, the centralized system of governance has produced two classes of people in Liberia (wealthy class and poor class).

The high poverty and illiteracy rates, marginalization of most of the citizens especially in rural areas, lack of accountability, abuse of state power can all be attributed to this centralized system of governance that also led to the 14 years of civil war (Dolo, 1996; Kieh, 1998; Sawyer, 1996). These assertions were also captured by Kromah (2003) who stated that over-centralized of governance in Liberia, political marginalization, miss-management of resources, and the lack of proper service delivery system were significant causes of the civil war in Liberia that started in December of 1989.

Additionally, the Liberia government has been struggling for many decades with the issue of citizens' participation in decision-making process as indicated by Sawyer (2008). Most political decision-making processes have been quasi-representation (Kieh, 2008). Recognizing the many contributions rural citizens have made and their potential for contractive participation, yet the rights to participation in political affairs including registering to vote, voting, and power to partnership continue to be limited. Moreover, the gap to political participation in political decision making among rural and urban citizens

continues to widen as asserted by Sawyer (2008), Dolo (1996), and Kieh (2008). Adequate social, economic, and education development like roads, affordable healthcare, primary education for children are limited and in most rural communities are not existing, they concluded.

However, drawing from an overwhelming number of participants' perceptions during the interview, Liberia's democracy system is relatively experiencing some growth with the Government of Liberia instituting several policies and development agendas to address the needs of citizens at national and local levels. However, more work still needs to be done for decentralization to achieve its full potential in Liberia.

Recommendation for Further Study

I understood from the beginning of the study that more work needed to be done to create opportunity for more reforms that will include the full realization of decentralization policy to meet it outcomes and benefits. More research that will provide opportunities to also close the gap that exists between national and local governments.

The gap in this study creates many challenges as well as opportunities for public administrators, policy analysts, and political leaders to engage in future research. Scholars and Academia in the fields of public policy and administration must begin to provide more research might provide opportunities for citizens participation and good governance in Liberia. This most include more study in how governments in Africa, specifically in Liberia can properly manage the polarities of democracy which is the key to good governance and adequate participation. If these opportunities are provided, both national and local government will enjoy more development, rebuilding, reconciliation,

and revitalization of the way government deliver services to citizens and avoid political, religious, and tribal conflicts.

Recommendations and Suggestions for Policy Reform

This dissertation that investigated the perception of decentralization policy of Liberia, suggests that a proactive intervention can facilitate the transformation of Liberia. The recombinant efforts of full democracy and breaking away from centralism structure build bridges or create adequate democratic governance system in Liberia. Importantly, decentralization policy with the proper management of the polarities of democracy can cure citizens isolation, oppressive, corruption, abuse of state power, human rights violation, and marginalization which are the main obstacles to decentralization. Additionally, decentralization policy offers a transformative framework that empowers people and societies by putting citizens at the heart of decision-making and governance structures.

As indicated in table below, the respondents suggested few areas as priorities for the improvement of the decentralization implementation based on a scale from 1-5 with five being the highest and one the lowest. See Below

Figure 5

Summary of Participants' Recommendations

Recommended action	Ranking score	Outcome
Create public awareness of decentralization efforts	5	Citizen will be informed of the decentralization efforts
Improve approach to decentralization implementation	5	The evaluation will identify ways for improvement

Accountability framework	2	National and local government will ensure transparency of public resources
Clear about roles of each player in the decentralization implementation	2	Institution will be assessed based on the specific role played during the implementation
Create Institutional framework/organizational structure	2	Citizens will create and organize them at grassroot and community level
Enhanced internal and external communication/coordination	2	A communication plan to enhance coordination

The table presented indicated a higher need to improve public awareness on

decentralization and to improve the approach to the implementation of the

decentralization policy based on the score of 5-point. The other areas for improvement

with 2-points scores were the need to improve accountability, to clarify stakeholder roles,

create organizational structure at the community level, and to enhance external and

internal communication. These recommendations from the respondents must be

considered to enhance the decentralization policy in Liberia.

Additionally, the study saw that the revitalization of some Liberia government's policies

and approaches to service delivery will provide citizens the development they desire. The

nation must create the capacity not only to contribute to change, but to lead change in an

effective way to enhance an inclusive framework for all citizens. The literature examined

in this study revealed that citizens in Liberia have played significant roles in restoring

peace and democracy; therefore, their efforts are sorely needed in prospering

decentralization efforts. Thus, public and private sectors' officials must recognize and

respond to the strength and contribution of citizens. Ultimately, adhering to these policy

recommendations and suggestions offered in addition to the need for further study will

build a full democratic structure of government where decentralization policy will

enhance citizens' participation and increase good governance in Liberia. The policy

recommendations and suggestions are as follows:

- While acknowledging the role citizens have played in Liberia in recent years,

  reliance on mere political participation is not enough to produce the kinds of

  changes that will bring political, economic, social, and education benefits for

  ordinary citizens in Liberia. This is especially true for citizens in rural towns

  and villages. One must also consider the differential investments and

  participation between traditional and nontraditional citizens. The citizens'

  movement cannot, of itself, ensure any automatic and equal representation for

  all citizens. Any effort to secure development for citizens requires a strong

  and proactive state with leaders who can implement strong decentralization

  policies.

- For the totality of citizens in Liberia to benefit fully from the process of

  development will require disaggregating national government and local

  government and developing specific and effective programs for each of them.

- Legal and constitution reforms and public policies aimed at increasing

  citizens' equal rights must be formed and enforced by social context and local

  customs through which local people negotiate various relationships.

- In a battered, ravished, and post-war-torn country such as Liberia with little or

  no private sector investment or state infrastructure, the government must bear

  an unusually large burden for producing and sustaining initiatives to stimulate

long term changes within the economy. This investment will provide more

economic resources for citizens to help them succeed.

- The government must modernize the economy by transforming subsistence

  agriculture, industrializing the economy, educating citizens, and providing

  vital services such as health, housing, food, water and work to local government.

These recommendations and suggestions are Liberia best options for increasing

opportunities for citizens participation, good governance, growth and development in

Liberia.

Implications for Social Change

The unmeasurable contribution of this study to examine a public policy issue that

has the potential to enhance citizens' participation and increase good government in

Liberia was to offer positive social change. This means that the findings in the study will

provide in-depth understanding and insight on the potential of decentralization policy as a

prescription for reform that transfer power from centralized system of governance to a

decentralized system. The implications for social change include opportunity to build a

strong relationship between local and national government in Liberia to deliver adequate

services which will ensure greater improvement of the relationship between government

and citizens. Also, this responsibility will not solely rely on national government but on

citizens' efforts to ensure and guarantee their participation in their own affairs at both

levels.

Additionally, there would be more collaboration and community development.

This will be an extension of national government to ensure social services are adequately

provided through decentralization programs. This change will remove much of the overhead the government must deal with including hiring, training of staff, and meeting the basic needs of society to local government. The citizens themselves will become major stakeholders in their political affairs and in decision making processes in Liberia.

As stated by Bissessar (2002) that generally public policy reform helps and encourage governments to improve service deliveries which will improve the lives of its citizens. Adhering to these social change implications will sustain peace, democracy, social justice, political stability, and eliminate bad governance, human rights violations, and citizens' isolation in Liberia.

Conclusion

The emergence of decentralization politics and policies in some countries around the world continues to be perceived as prescription to provide good governance, and leadership, and adequate participation in decision-making around in both public and private institutions. Many policy analysts and public administrators over the years believed that decentralization policy has provided credible leadership and has been the political and economic machineries for fast growth and development in most countries.

As stated in the literature, decentralization policy framework offers more transparency and citizens' full participation in the governing processes at all levels. Moreover, decentralization in the political context involves transferring of power to local communities to determine policies, participation in decision making, and development. Decentralization is therefore conceptualized as a political fulfillment when political power is shared between national and local agencies, especially in Liberia as the nation

strives for pollical stability, human rights improvement, social justice, the need to manage the polarities of democracy adequately. This will ultimately set the stage for social change that will allow every citizen to become stakeholder and participants in the political process at national and local levels. Most importantly, this will create strong leaders at these levels who will be enabled to maintain and foster development and political stability.

There is no doubt based on citizens' perceptions during the interviews that decentralization in the 21st century addresses the issue of how government can adapt to new systems of change and how services should be delivered effectively and efficiently. Overwhelmingly, the participants perceived that decentralization policy brings about changes that promote equal rights, participation and representation, and embraces the voice of every citizen which has been a major problem for many years in Liberia. However, the participants further perceived Liberia's decentralization policy as theoretical document which has many challenges to overcome to meet its full potential and benefits as in other countries around the world.

As Liberia is currently recovering from war in myriad contexts, effective change in governing structure that will require shifting from a centralized system of governance to decentralization is vital in sustaining democracy and effecting reform. Policy and political reforms that will give equality, transform stein, and give equal access to community resources for all citizens in Liberia is critical for growth and development. Additionally, decentralization itself will increase citizens' participation in decision-

making, policy formulation, and development at all levels. It will help transform

institutions and government to creating opportunities for all.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself, considering your educational level, job title/position, religion affiliation, and level in government or private sector

2. How do you perceive decentralization policy implementation in Liberia or what is your general perception of decentralization policy in Liberia?

3. What are some ways you perceive decentralization policy can enhance good governance and citizen's participation?

4. What are some roles that you perceive should citizens play in the implementation of decentralization policy in Liberia?

5. What are some benefits you perceive of decentralization policy in Liberia?

6. What some potential obstacles and barriers you perceive to the implementation of decentralization policy in Liberia?

7. Based on your perception, how would these obstacles and barriers affect citizens' participation and good governance in Liberia?

8. Based on your perception, how do you perceive ways to overcome these obstacles and barriers if there are any?

9. Based on your perception what are some potential dangers that could occur if these obstacles and barriers cannot be overcome?

10. Finally, offer your overall perception of decentralization as a potential intervention to citizens' participation and good governance in Liberia considering the cultural, political, and social context in Liberia. What would some potential dividend when the policy is implemented?